United Nations A/60/PV.21

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

21st plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Abdurrahman Mohamed Shalghem, Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Shalghem (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure at the outset to affirm my delegation's confidence that the Swedish leadership of the work of the current General Assembly session will help us achieve the best results. I also seize this opportunity to commend the efforts made by Gabon, represented by its Foreign Minister, during its leadership of the previous session. I would also like to reiterate our gratitude for the efforts made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to advance the march of United Nations reform and achieve the goals enshrined in its Charter.

Since the 1970s, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has been fully aware of the need to reform the United Nations and was the first State to put forward official proposals to the General Assembly in that regard, presenting draft resolutions from the thirty-fourth to the fortieth sessions aimed at reforming the Security Council and abolishing the veto privilege. Though the Libyan proposals were not successful because of the objection of the super-Powers, they did, however, create a wide understanding of that issue within the General Assembly, resulting in the adoption of a resolution at its forty-seventh session establishing an open-ended group to review the issue of fair representation in the Security Council and expanding its membership. We participated actively in the group's work, but its activities reached an impasse.

We felt hopeful over the last few years while we were conducting consultations at all levels in order to realize a radical reform for the United Nations system, in the service of international peace and security. However, as the date of our summit-level meeting this year approached, it became evident that the reform we sought remained elusive. This is because some of the privileged Powers of the Security Council do not wish to give up their privileges — in fact not even to share these privileges with others.

The victorious countries in the Second World War arrogated rights and privileges for themselves at the time the Charter was drawn up. This led to the marginalization of the General Assembly and rendered the Security Council a domineering body — inequitable, unbalanced and undemocratic, with the veto privilege greatly abused. The United Nations, therefore, has been unable to administer justice among nations; in fact, some of its decisions have inflicted harm on many peoples.

As we discuss United Nations reform, we should take into consideration that its membership has now reached 191 States. New global problems have emerged, in addition to the old ones. Thus, it is

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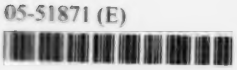

necessary to place the power of decision-making in the hands of all Members of the United Nations, that is, in the hands of the General Assembly, in which all States have equal votes. However, if such an agreement is not possible, we should seek a new formula for permanent membership in the Security Council.

In this respect, we propose that permanent membership be accorded to geographical groups, not to specific States. We also propose that the African Union be granted permanent membership even before the comprehensive reform has been decided, given the fact that Africa is the only continent without a country holding permanent membership in the Security Council.

As a member of the African Union, we affirm our adherence to the common African position, adopted by the Fifth African Union Summit, held in Sirte, Libya, on 4 and 5 July 2005. This position was confirmed in the African Union's Extraordinary Summit on United Nations Reform held in Addis Ababa on 4 August 2005.

Libya believes that the elimination of weapons of mass destruction is a fundamental factor in confidence-building and the consolidation of international peace and security. Hence, Libya declared on 19 December 2003 its voluntary renunciation of the programmes and materials that could lead to the production of internationally prohibited weapons and their means of delivery. Since that date, it has been cooperating in a transparent manner with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). All relevant materials and equipment have been disposed of with the knowledge of experts from the IAEA and the OPCW.

Libya is now party to all international conventions on weapons of mass destruction, as well as the code of ethics concerning ballistic missiles. We hope that members of the international community will cooperate in a more appropriate manner to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, acquired by all States, without discrimination, in order to create a world in which peace and security prevail.

The Libyan declaration was a culmination of previous Libyan efforts undertaken in this field, starting with effective participation in the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa — through its accession to the Pelindaba Treaty — and the call to make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

We confirm our readiness to continue our full cooperation with all international organizations in this field and emphasize Libya's right to expand its programme of peaceful uses of nuclear energy for development, particularly in the fields of medicine, agriculture, desalination, mining and oil exploration. We hope that all countries in the region would place all their nuclear facilities under the IAEA inspection regime.

Our country is concerned with human rights issues at the international and national levels. We deal with all organizations working in the field of human rights in a transparent manner. We have donated 2 million dinars to support the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we are now reviewing some of our national legislation that is not in conformity with international instruments in the field of human rights. We also have eliminated the People's Court, established in the early years of the revolution, and its jurisdiction has been assigned to regular courts.

Libya was among the first States that called for the coordination of international efforts to combat international terrorism and that proposed an extraordinary session of the General Assembly to study that phenomenon and to develop measures to combat it and eradicate its causes.

Libya has condemned terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism, ratified all international and regional conventions concerning terrorism and is cooperating actively with the committee established by the Security Council on that subject. We believe that the eradication of terrorism requires practical measures to eliminate its causes. Among such actions, we should actively strengthen human rights protections for all people, confront all acts of aggression and occupation of the lands of others, fight poverty and encourage democracy.

Terrorism cannot be uprooted unilaterally through actions taken by one State or group of States. The solution for such a problem cannot be achieved by linking it to a certain religion or nationality. It is not fair that the legitimate struggle of peoples to achieve self-determination and independence should be classified as terrorism. We should all exert and

coordinate all our possible efforts under the umbrella of the United Nations to combat terrorism and complete, as early as possible, a comprehensive counter-terrorism treaty.

My country was subjected to unjust sanctions that caused great material losses totalling about $40 billion. Now, while this matter has ended and the reason behind the sanctions settled, I extend my gratitude to all the friendly and sisterly countries that stood by our side and supported our position in tackling that situation.

Competent Libyan authorities are now drawing up plans for restructuring the Libyan economy and are reviewing the public sector, encouraging the private sector and providing opportunity for all to engage in economic activities. New economic policies were adopted in order to advance the national economy, eliminate deficiencies and improve performance. Certain measures have been taken in the monetary field, including the adoption of a single exchange rate for the Libyan dinar against foreign currencies, the abolition of monetary control and a reduction of income taxes. Import and export licences as well as customs guarantees on exports have been abolished as have customs fees on approximately 3,500 imported items.

Important steps have been taken for the privatization of many public sector companies. Libya has opened its doors to investors and a law for the encouragement of foreign investment has been promulgated. This law gives foreign investors many privileges and exemptions and allows them 100 per cent ownership of their enterprises or partnership with domestic investors. Our application to join the World Trade Organization was approved unanimously by the organization on 27 July 2004. We seek further cooperation from all countries in that respect.

The consolidation and realization of peace and security for all is a fundamental goal of the United Nations. It is an objective that could not be realized by the Organization without the assistance and cooperation of all Member States, which could be effective tools to solve the most difficult problems and conflicts among countries, particularly in Africa. In this respect, we wish to express our satisfaction with the stabilization of the situation in Sierra Leone and Angola and the improvement of the situation in Somalia, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the signing of the peace agreement in Sudan.

We call on all Member States to assist the African Union in its endeavours to face its various challenges and create a unified African continent capable of achieving progress and participating effectively in the march towards progress, upholding freedom and human rights and eradicating wars, poverty and disease while removing the remnants of colonialism. We hope that support will be extended to the African Union's plans to achieve prosperity for all African people by providing assistance to the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The international community so far has failed to solve the Palestinian problem, although it is as old as the United Nations itself. In fact, the problem is getting worse. The Palestinian people have lived for over half a century either as refugees all over the world or subjected to an occupying Power, which has usurped its land and practiced against them the most horrible crimes, including the killing of children, women and the elderly. Their lands have been confiscated, their farms burned, their trees uprooted, their houses destroyed over their occupants, while houses are built for settlers coming from all over the world. Even though highly sophisticated weapons are being used against civilians, the Security Council stands unable to take concrete steps to stop such practices. This has encouraged the occupying Power to continue its aggression and crimes, heedless of the decisions of the international community.

The suffering of the Palestinian people requires that urgent and firm action be taken by the international community to put an end to the Israeli aggression and provide a radical solution for the Palestinian question.

We believe that the solution cannot be achieved by accepting a de facto situation or by merely adopting resolutions or unrealizable plans. It will happen through a radical solution that allows and guarantees the return of all Palestinian refugees to their lands and the establishment of a democratic State on the land of historical Palestine in which Jews and Arabs live side by side, enjoying full equality, similar to the South African model, where blacks and whites reconciled after decades of conflict and bloodshed. If such a solution is not realized, with the support of the international community, the suffering of the

Palestinian people will continue, and the region will continue to witness tension and conflict without peace and security.

The Israeli occupation forces must withdraw from all occupied Arab territories; the Golan Heights must be returned to Syrian sovereignty and the Shabaa farms to Lebanon.

In Iraq, where international law has been violated and the country subjected to occupation on unfounded bases and flimsy pretexts, the tragedy is escalating daily, getting more and more difficult to solve. The Iraqi people are paying a high price with the lives of their sons and daughters as a result of the occupation. We have to exert every possible effort to guarantee a speedy end to the occupation in order to enable Iraq to regain its independence and sovereignty and preserve its territorial integrity and Arab identity. The Iraqis must be allowed to determine their own affairs, future and manage their resources, and to achieve self-determination with freedom involving all citizens without the marginalization of any group so that peace, prosperity and security can prevail all over Iraq.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alberto Gatmaitan Romulo, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Romulo (Philippines): I convey my delegation's felicitations on your election, Mr. President, on leading this historic session. I also wish to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Jean Ping, whose leadership and wisdom proved to be the key to the successful negotiation and adoption of our outcome document.

Sixty years ago, enduring peace was foremost in the minds of the founders of our Organization. Scarred from war and stunned by mankind's capacity for death and destruction, they did not consider failure an option. Our common humanity demanded that we build a better and peaceful world. To do that, representatives from 50 nations gathered in San Francisco, in a building dedicated to those who defended and fought for freedom, to draft a charter that would unite the nations of the world for peace. General Carlos P. Romulo, the head of the Philippine delegation, articulating the hopes of mankind, said then at the United Nations: "Let us make this floor the last battlefield."

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The leading lights attending the founding of the United Nations are still familiar to us — Joseph Paul Boncour of France, Wellington Koo of China, Andrei Gromyko of Russia, Lord Halifax of the United Kingdom, Edward Stettinius of the United States, His Royal Highness Faisal ibn Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar of India, Jan Smuts of the Union of South Africa, Jan Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, Herbert Evatt of Australia, Exequiel Padilla of Mexico, and many others. Those visionaries led the historic and daunting task of writing the United Nations Charter.

A third of mankind was still under colonial domination. Only three Asian nations were in attendance. Most of Africa were not yet independent nations. In a forum dominated by colonial Powers, the Philippines fought to ensure the notion that the goal of the Trusteeship Council should not only be self-government but independence.

When the United Nations emblem was being drawn, General Romulo asked that the Philippines, although still a commonwealth, be included. He was told that the Philippines would only be a small dot on that now familiar map. He demanded nevertheless that the dot be placed on the map.

The Philippines insistence on its place on the world map, albeit just a dot, symbolized for many soon-to-be independent and developing nations the challenge facing the United Nations. The clear challenge facing the United Nations at its inception, and particularly developing nations, was to ensure that freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to pursue human dignity would be at the heart of the political independence of the States.

Sixty years after San Francisco, we continue to face the challenge of freeing all our peoples from want and from fear and allowing them the true dignity that they deserve as independent nations. The fight for the political and legal independence of States is over, but the fight to win for all peoples their freedom from fear and want and to pursue human dignity continues.

For the Philippines, as a developing country, freedom from want is of utmost concern. Poverty, the energy crisis and insufficient financial resources, compounded by debt, are the pressing challenges

facing my country and its people. We also face serious security threats, particularly from terrorism — with many of our citizens victimized by terrorist attacks. We recognize the economic and social underpinnings of such acts.

In the not too distant past, my country also had to confront the threat of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Our national experience prompts us to agree with the Secretary-General that these global threats are all interrelated, and our different perceptions of the imminence of the threats facing us should not deter us from cooperating to address them.

This brings me to my central theme — that we should let the bond of our broad vision of our common humanity inspire us all to work towards a stronger United Nations for a better world.

We agree with the Secretary-General that no nation can defend itself against threats entirely on its own. We agree that development, freedom from fear and human rights concerns are interrelated and should be equally considered in designing the solutions to the threats we face. We believe that because of this interrelation, these concerns should be addressed in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

The world is facing the problem of unbridled spiralling of oil prices. International cooperation on energy is increasingly becoming an imperative as the capacity and capability of countries, particularly non-oil producing developing countries, to meet their development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), are affected. This unavoidably impacts on security.

The Philippines welcomes the 100 per cent debt cancellation for the 38 heavily indebted poor countries. However, the debt situation is expected to worsen, as middle-income countries go deeper in debt with the threat of rising world oil prices. Once more, the need for other innovative and creative means of international cooperation for debt relief also becomes imperative.

The Philippines has proposed the consideration of the adoption of a debt conversion scheme including "debt-for-equity" or "debt-for-Millennium Development Goal projects". The scheme calls for the conversion of 50 per cent of the debt service into equity for MDG projects of at least equal value with an income earning potential.

Debt for development projects can focus on areas that would achieve MDG benchmarks such as hospitals and health care, schools, classrooms, information technology, clean water, electricity, reforestation, eco-tourism and many others that should help us achieve our MDGs by 2015.

The nexus between development and international migration cannot be overlooked. Migration brings challenges and opportunities to countries of origin, destination and transit. This is another multifaceted issue that requires international cooperation to be addressed in a coordinated and coherent manner. A comprehensive and effective international mechanism for cooperation should be drawn up to address its politico-security, social, cultural and economic development dimensions.

As one of the major sending States, the Philippines stands ready to cooperate with all countries in contributing towards the formulation of effective mechanisms that would help ensure a smooth management of the migration phenomenon.

The Philippines knows only too well the fear that terrorism instils in the civilian population and the anguish it brings to victims and close relatives. We take cognizance of terrorism's political, social and economic underpinnings.

Our national experience has shown us the value of dialogue in our approach to consider all those factors. The Philippines wants to share this positive value of dialogue and therefore has taken the lead in drawing attention to the need for interfaith dialogue as an integral part for the promotion of the culture of peace. My President recently convened a successful informal summit on interfaith dialogue and cooperation here in the United Nations. The summit adopted a declaration calling for greater interreligious, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue and cooperation to ensure a lasting and durable peace and understanding at the global, regional and national levels. We invite all who agree with its principles to consider endorsing the declaration.

We all acknowledge that the world has reached an unprecedented stage when there are virtually no more barriers, whether of space or time. Communication technology has made possible the dissemination of information instantaneously to practically all parts and corners of the globe.

As the nineteenth century brought us the industrial revolution, the twentieth century brought us to the technology revolution ushered in by computerization. The twenty-first century now offers infinite possibilities to further advance the information age. At no other time has the saying "no man is an island" rang truer. As the Secretary-General has said, what affects one affects all in this globalized world.

However, the information age is a two-edged sword, as experience has shown us. While it opened opportunities, it also brought challenges that we all have to cope with. Our concern however is that just as the limitless opportunities it offered could be used to benefit humanity, it could also be used destructively. Information technology enables companies to search for lowest cost factors of production globally, operate more efficiently and pass on the benefits to consumers. However, this same technology also enables disillusioned and desperate members of society to become agents of terror and recruit adherents to their way of thinking as well as to fund their destructive activities. It is therefore in our common interest to bring together our collective strengths to take advantage of the opportunities before us as well as to confront common threats.

For 60 years, the United Nations has provided us the forum to draw up norms of conduct that take on board all our concerns. From its inception with 51 Member States in 1945, the membership has almost quadrupled to its present 191 States.

While the United Nations has, time and again, adopted some reforms, at no other time has the pressure for far-reaching change been starker than it is now. The evolving global and regional security environment, ongoing conflicts in many countries that have multidimensional root causes and other flashpoints have to be addressed. It is clear that in pursuing our shared interest to preserve our common humanity, the United Nations continues to serve as our indispensable tool. It is therefore also our shared interest to strengthen it.

Even before San Francisco, some key decisions had already been reached among the major Powers, primarily on the power of the veto, or what was referred to then as the "unanimity rule". Our delegation, in concert with others, pressed for an increased role of the General Assembly. We felt that this was the balance necessary to safeguard the effectiveness of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. We also urged wider and more equitable representation in the Security Council — an aspiration that has yet to achieve realization, and thus an advocacy that my country carries to this day.

The outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting provides the substance upon which to strengthen the United Nations system. It should guide us well in our discussions on institutional reform.

Six decades after San Francisco, our common humanity remains at stake. We have today another opportunity to make our United Nations succeed. Whether the issue is United Nations reform or freedom from want or fear, we must act now to ensure that the principles committed to by our leaders at this year's summit be implemented effectively and efficiently.

Allow me therefore to present at this point some practical strategies that may assist us in ensuring that we achieve our goals.

Firstly, the agreed commitments should be broken down into tangible steps. Concrete benchmarks and pragmatic indicators of progress must be set.

Secondly, with concrete international benchmarks, national strategies can be geared to achieving them. All concerned national actors in domestic procedures and actions should be involved. This is necessary to put into effect and implement multilateral commitments. Ideally, national actors should be privy to developments in the negotiating process and have the opportunity to provide their own inputs with respect to the national position to be taken. This is expected to ensure implementation and follow-up to the commitments made by our leaders.

Thirdly, we must not lose sight of the need to increase congruence among national, regional and international plans of action. Keeping these in sight contributes to a faster rate of achieving these goals. National plans of action can be elevated to the regional level, whenever feasible.

Fourthly, we must rethink our existing modes of international cooperation. There will be value in assessing how we have been collaborating bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally. Let us assess the effectiveness of our current modes of cooperation.

In adopting practical measures and in discovering new opportunities and addressing new threats, we must be mindful of the old hopes and enduring dreams that led to the birth of our United Nations. As a child, I listened with all innocence as my family closely followed the work of the Philippine delegation in San Francisco. I felt proud that my nation, the Philippines — the Benjamin among the founders — was part of this historic event.

We were rebuilding our shattered lives and mourning our dead. Yet we held on to hope. We had hope that no country would ever again crush us with their bombs, trample us with their tanks or defile our mothers, sisters and daughters. As a nation devastated by war, we placed great hope in the United Nations. I still remember the words that made us dare dream of a better, more peaceful world — words heard by a child through the crackle and static of an old radio, words spoken by General Carlos P. Romulo in addressing the delegates in San Francisco in 1945. He said:

> "Words are more powerful than guns in the defence of human dignity. Treaties are stronger than armamented boundaries. The only impregnable line is that of human understanding."

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Dame Billie Miller, Senior Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): I join with other delegations in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Barbados delegation's appreciation is also extended to the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, Foreign Minister of Gabon, for the outstanding work he has done in guiding the Assembly during the previous session and particularly in the preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting.

Last week, heads of State and Government, in an attempt to define and articulate a global consensus, adopted an outcome document representing the determination of the vast majority to make progress towards full achievement of the goals and targets inspired by the Millennium Declaration, as well as a number of decisions on United Nations reform. Barbados, as part of the tremendous efforts made by many, had hoped for bolder and more ambitious commitments, particularly regarding development.

In all of the circumstances, we accept that the outcome of the High-level Plenary Meeting provides the platform for coordinated international action in response to the complex and interconnected global challenges confronting this and future generations.

The Millennium Development Goals are now recognized as the world's time-bound, quantifiable targets for addressing poverty in its many dimensions of hunger, disease, lack of access to health care and education, gender inequality and environmental degradation. Progress on their achievement has been far from uniform across the world, or for that matter across the Goals. Unless action is taken on a much broader front and a much faster pace, the eminently laudable words of the Declaration will serve only as grim reminders of human needs neglected and of numerous promises unfulfilled.

The Secretary-General has stated that our generation, with the combination of resources and technology at its disposal, must be the first to make the right of development a reality for everyone and to free the entire human race from war.

Progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Barbados is encouraging. Although the regional report of the United Nations Development Programme presents an optimistic outlook for most Caribbean countries in respect of the first five Goals, the region faces severe challenges and constraints to their achievement. Foremost among them, and beyond our control, is our vulnerability to economic shocks and to every natural disaster known to mankind — be it hurricane, volcanic eruption, mudslide, earthquake or flood.

Equally challenging is the fuller and more effective integration of Barbados in the globalized economy, for which a successful outcome of the next Doha development round of talks on trade liberalization is crucial.

Permit me to refer to an outstanding omission from the Millennium Development Goals, that of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Indeed, the exclusion was so stark that the Secretary-General himself stated:

> "The Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty

and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed. And that means stronger efforts to promote women's rights and greater investment in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning."

We must seize the opportunity presented by this current review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals to mainstream sexual and reproductive health and rights by adopting a universal access target or indicator that can be used to facilitate the monitoring of progress in this area and to hold Governments accountable.

Barbados takes the position that women are central to the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. After all, women of childbearing age constitute one billion of the world's poorest people, and for this group sexual and reproductive health issues are at the fore of problems of ill health and loss of productivity. Women living in poverty are not usually aware of their sexual and reproductive rights and are often ignorant about the services to which they have a right of access. Similarly, poor women, and in particular poor young women, are highly susceptible to contracting HIV/AIDS despite the prevalence of preventive measures.

I feel compelled to support the call for mobilizing new resources for improved sexual and reproductive health services for women and for men worldwide. Individuals, non-governmental organizations and Governments in developing countries are already contributing more than 75 per cent to current expenditures in this field. It is certainly time for developed countries to live up to the pledges they made at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

Central to the global partnership for development, which is embodied in the eighth Millennium Development Goal, are the commitments by developing countries to pursue sound macroeconomic policies, to make the most creative use of our limited endowments, to respect human rights and to ensure that our material development takes place within the context of social justice, commitments that Barbados has proudly upheld since becoming independent in 1966.

By the same token, developed countries must fulfil their obligations made at numerous United Nations summits and conferences on trade, debt and finance, and in particular their pledge to honour the outstanding target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product for official development assistance (ODA). Increases in ODA will not be sufficient to achieve the sustained economic growth and development that we all seek. It will also be necessary for the international community to address the indebtedness of poor and middle-income developing countries; promote foreign direct investment flows to a broader range of developing countries; confront serious global environmental problems such as climate change; combat HIV/AIDS; and reform multilateral trading arrangements as well as systemic deficiencies in the global economic and financial system. These are the real threats to our human security as we see it in the Caribbean.

The Doha development round, launched by the World Trade Organization in 2001, is so called precisely because trade ministers deliberately sought to place development at the centre of multilateral trade negotiations. This decision inspired new hope in developing countries that we would be afforded the opportunity to participate more effectively and beneficially in the new global economic system. Regrettably, some of our developed country counterparts seem to have reneged on their commitment. We are still locked in a fierce struggle at the World Trade Organization to persuade these countries to rise above their narrow self-interests and embrace positions that would allow for the creation of a more just global economic order.

Barbados fears that we could squander yet another opportunity genuinely to involve developing countries in the multilateral trading system. We do not believe that the international community can continue to ignore this fact. Furthermore, we are far from convinced that the High-level Plenary Meeting of last week fully refocused global attention on matters of development and rescued from obscurity the global development agenda, which has unfortunately been overtaken by a narrowly defined anti-terrorism agenda.

"It is time to put the global development agenda, including that for the world's smallest and most vulnerable countries and societies, back on track". Those are the words of the Prime Minister of Barbados, The Right Honourable Owen Arthur.

Barbados considers that peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law represent, in addition to development, a strong foundation on which the United Nations can assist the international community in building a stronger world. Issues of terrorism, responsibility to protect, disarmament and non-proliferation need also to be addressed.

Terrorism affects all countries, both large and small, and all countries have an obligation to the international community to ensure that the perpetrators of acts of terrorism do not find safe haven and succour within their borders. While we believe that the United Nations should strongly and unequivocally issue a condemnation of terrorism in all of its forms, care must be taken to formulate an unambiguous definition that would provide a basis for a comprehensive convention. This would rightly place the United Nations at the very heart of the fight against terrorism, signalling a multilateral approach to this scourge.

Closely linked to the issue of terrorism is that of disarmament and non-proliferation. Action taken by the United Nations must be clear and firm, and efforts must be redoubled to find compromises that would facilitate progress. The Caribbean remains a major route for international narco-traffickers and suffers from the destabilizing effects of the parallel illegal trade in small arms, promoted by the same transnational criminal elements. The absence of concerted international action against small arms trafficking places the peace-loving societies of the small Caribbean States at great risk. Small arms proliferation and the violence that accompanies it impact negatively on our development, our security and human rights, and pose a severe threat to the peaceful, stable and sustainable development of Caribbean democracies.

Barbados supports the call for the negotiation of a new international instrument on the marking and tracing of weapons. This is an urgent priority which will provide the international community with an effective means of monitoring the movement and proliferation of small arms and taking comprehensive interdiction and enforcement action against illegal traders.

Barbados remains resolute in its rejection of the continued use of the Caribbean Sea for the trans-shipment of nuclear and radioactive waste. This high-risk practice poses grave danger to our region in the event that there is an accident, a natural disaster or a terrorist attack.

The Secretary-General has emphasized that if the United Nations is to be a useful instrument for its members and is to successfully address the challenges facing humanity, then it must be fully adapted to the needs and circumstances not only of today, but tomorrow as well. Barbados shares this view. Reform should not be seen as an end in and of itself, but as a means towards achieving the goals we have set ourselves in 2000 in the Millennium Declaration, to make the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing the priorities of the world's peoples. Reform should also seek to enhance the role of the United Nations in global affairs to create the conditions for more democratic and transparent decision-making and to provide a forum for the full and equal participation of small States.

Barbados believes that the main organs of the United Nations should be strengthened. This will require the revitalization of the General Assembly to make it the chief deliberative and policy-making body of the Organization, as envisaged by the United Nations Charter. It will further require the reform of the Security Council to make it more representative of current global geopolitical realities. Small States should be represented continuously in the membership of the Council, and any arrangements for the selection of the non-permanent members of a reformed Council should be so formulated.

We are convinced that the Economic and Social Council should play a larger role in policy-making on international economic and social matters and the promotion of improved global economic governance. A restructured Economic and Social Council should find its voice again as a vibrant forum for economic policy dialogue, for promoting increased guidance and coordination to the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies and for monitoring the implementation and follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals and other major elements of the global development order.

If the United Nations is to undertake fully and effectively the demanding responsibilities with which it has been charged, then it must be provided with the required level of resources, and the Secretary-General must be given appropriate managerial authority. The Barbados delegation intends to participate actively in

the delineation of these issues during this sixtieth session.

As a small State, Barbados believes that a strong multilateral system, with the United Nations at its core, is our greatest protection from the unilateral pursuits of the powerful. We are unwavering in our commitment to the precepts of multilateralism and to the belief that no other international institution is better suited or equipped to meet the diverse demands for global peace, security and development than this Organization. As a member of the United Nations, Barbados must be assured that its voice will continue to be heard regardless of size or economic power. This is a struggle from which we are not at liberty to abstain.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ferenc Somogyi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary.

Mr. Somogyi (Hungary): Let me start by extending to the President my sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I can assure him that in fulfilling his challenging and responsible duties, he will have the support and full cooperation of the delegation of Hungary. Our tribute and thanks are also due to his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, who served us with exemplary devotion and honour.

Effective multilateralism remains an important objective of the foreign policy of Hungary. Therefore, we are pleased to see the United Nations standing ready to face the emerging threats and challenges by making efforts to adapt its activities to the realities of our contemporary world.

The United Nations has served for 60 years as the core institution for collective security. In our global and interdependent world we have to acknowledge that development, peace, security and human rights form an indispensable foundation for the security and well-being of our times.

My Government is particularly pleased that issues such as the fight against terrorism, international protection of human rights, the proposed Human Rights Council, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the reform of United Nations management, as well as challenges related to development, have found proper reflection in the recommendations of the summit.

International terrorism continues to be a major threat to our societies. The recently experienced horrors of terror are sowing the seeds of instability all over the world. Hungary, along with its partners in the European Union and NATO, strongly condemns all forms of terrorism. Measures taken in the course of combating terrorist forces, however, must always remain in conformity with basic international standards, in particular with human rights and refugee and humanitarian law. We believe that the United Nations needs to accord top priority to the fight against the scourge of terrorism. My country is keen to see the elaboration and adoption by the General Assembly of a comprehensive convention on terrorism, which would, among others things, give the proper legal definition of terrorist acts.

Freedom, democracy and human rights should constitute the basic framework of life for every individual. We know from experience that they are not granted automatically; they must be won and enforced through hard and persistent efforts. It is of paramount importance therefore that essential human rights-related activities, such as servicing the treaty implementation machinery or monitoring undertaken by the special procedures, are given their due share in the funding provisions of the United Nations regular budget.

Driven by the objective to promote democracy in the world, the Government of the Republic of Hungary has established the Budapest International Center for Democratic Transition. The Center is set to provide assistance for democratic reforms drawing upon the experience of countries that have recently undergone political, economic and social transition. These nations, having had to face and address the challenges of transition in the recent past, can probably best serve as helping hands to countries in need in this regard.

It is in the same spirit that Hungary warmly welcomes the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund. The Budapest International Center for Democratic Transition will be eager to coordinate its activities with the Fund in the framework of a close cooperative relationship.

Hungary finds the resolution to establish a new United Nations mechanism dealing with the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities to be highly encouraging. The appointment of an independent expert on minority

issues is an important step in the right direction. The United Nations however still has a long way to go in meeting the full scope of its responsibilities with regard to the international protection of minority rights.

Educating young generations about the lessons of the past is an essential tool to combat discrimination and intolerance. For this reason a day of Holocaust remembrance has been introduced into Hungarian school curriculum. It is in that same spirit that Hungary supports the proposal to place Holocaust remembrance on the agenda in the United Nations General Assembly.

Hungary recognizes that development is a central goal by itself and is ready to reaffirm its commitment to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development and global prosperity for all. As a new European Union member, Hungary is ready to gradually increase her official development assistance. The European Union recently made important decisions in support of Africa's development efforts. We reaffirm our commitment to contribute urgently to meeting the special needs of that continent.

We are encouraged to see that after so many years of wars and violence, democratic changes are bearing fruit for the peoples of the Western Balkans. It is more than promising that the political and economic perspectives offered by the European Union and NATO are the main driving forces today for the countries of this region.

In order to find lasting solutions to the yet unresolved challenges of the Western Balkans, it is crucial to tackle the basic issues of security and stability in their broader regional dimensions. Regardless of its future status, it is vital that Kosovo be transformed into a viable entity, capable of exercising firm administrative control with a stable law and order situation and a transparent, dependable economy. Given the turbulent history of the Balkans, no long-term solution is conceivable without establishing harmonious inter-ethnic relationships. Well-defined and strictly implemented minority rights are the primary precondition for peace, stability and prosperity both in Kosovo and in the broader Western Balkans.

The Middle East conflict has wide-ranging implications on global peace and security, on the prospects of the world economy and, last but not least, on the fight against international terrorism. Hungary is of the firm view that the road map, based on the two-States principle, still gives us the best chance for reaching a just and lasting solution.

The implementation of the Gaza disengagement plan by the Government of Israel has been a step of truly historic proportions. Thus, the Middle East peace process has been given a new lease on life, but its sustainability is subject to further consistent, bold measures by both sides. In order to maintain the momentum, Israel needs to return to the road map, while the Palestinian National Authority has to demonstrate its own commitment to the peace process by carrying out the long overdue internal reforms and, most importantly, by eradicating terrorism and taking the law and order situation under effective control.

The continued instability in Iraq is a matter of grave concern. Hungary strongly condemns the acts of violence and terrorism in Iraq, which aim to undermine the process of reconstruction and political normalization. In spite of the alarming security situation and the obvious internal instability, the political transition in Iraq is making progress in line with Security Council resolution 1546 (2004). The approval of the recently drafted constitution is indispensable to carry on the political process. Further consistent efforts are required to properly engage all Iraqi communities in building a united, stable and democratic country.

Let me reiterate Hungary's continued commitment to provide assistance to the people of Iraq in their efforts to build a democratic and prosperous country that will soon take its due place in the family of democratic nations.

Hungary viewed the successful presidential elections last October as an important milestone on the way to political stabilization in Afghanistan. The parliamentary elections held only days ago marked a further major step leading to the establishment of proper democratic institutions in that country. Hungary is proud of the humanitarian assistance it has provided to the people of Afghanistan, as well as of the contribution it has made to facilitate the process of political stabilization. My country is ready to undertake further commitments in order to assist the Afghan people in rebuilding their country in peace and security.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction along with their means of delivery continues to undermine international peace and security. The threat

that terrorist groups and non-State actors will acquire nuclear, biological and chemical weapons is a major concern to us all. At the last session of the General Assembly, Hungary expressed its strong support for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), and called on all States to establish effective national export controls. We have noted with satisfaction that a great number of Member States had submitted comprehensive reports on their national measures serving the aim and purpose of the resolution.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is still a cornerstone of international peace, security and stability. The 2005 NPT Review Conference, however, failed to live up to our expectations. The international community needs to fulfil its responsibility in preserving the integrity of the Treaty while promoting its universal character.

Recognizing the grave threat posed by biological weapons, Hungary will work together with other nations in the run-up to the upcoming Biological and Toxic Weapons Review Conference. Hungary will strive to explore opportunities to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

My country remains committed to the Ottawa Convention banning landmines. We will have destroyed all equipment under the provisions of the Convention by the end of 2005, well in advance of the deadline.

At the current session, beyond the wide range of issues to be tackled, we have to make important decisions to put on track the implementation of the outcome document adopted by the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly. If we are guided by a sense of common responsibility and firmly anchored realism, the momentum for reform will be maintained. The delegation of Hungary stands ready to work in partnership with other delegations to make this happen.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Cheikh Gadio, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Senegalese living abroad of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Gadio (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure for me to express on behalf of my delegation warm congratulations on the outstanding election, of the President to lead the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I see the selection as a tribute to his excellent qualities as a diplomat without equal and recognition of the tireless commitment of Sweden to the noble causes of our Organization. He may be sure that in the discharge of his lofty mission, Senegal's support is completely understood.

Allow me to take this opportunity to say how much we have appreciated the commitment and the flair that his predecessor, my friend and brother, His Excellency the Minister of State Jean Ping, discharged his mandate at a decisive point in the existence of the United Nations. Whatever the results of the negotiations under way for a just and in-depth reform of our Organization, our brother Jean Ping will have given the most of himself, and we all owe him gratitude and respect.

I should also like here to pay tribute to the unfailing dedication to the causes of our Organization displayed by His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, a dedication that was recently reflected in his excellent and timely initiative to submit to Member States a substantial number of proposals aimed at ensuring the rebirth of the United Nations and making it possible to envisage a new dawn for multilateralism.

This year's general debate has been symbolic and strategic in nature in that it is being held following the High-level Plenary Meeting, which mobilized all of our leaders and was an expression of the will of all of the Member States to make the necessary adjustments for a revitalization of the founding values of the United Nations and for a better consideration of the aspiration of all peoples.

This is a crucial meeting carrying as it does within it the great hopes of the disadvantaged populations of the world, victims of endemic underdevelopment. The major results of this summit, in my view, are an expression of the faith of the international community in spirit and solidarity, interdependence and international cooperation, the raison d'être of the United Nations, at a time when our societies are faced with an increasingly complex international environment characterized by a globalization that is still not being clearly defined.

Although there are signposts, the road before us is still long, and so great is the lag behind of many developing countries, particularly on the African continent, in achieving the Millennium Development

Goals, that billions of men and women around the world should be helped to free themselves from difficulties and from exclusion and despair so they can fully enjoy the dividends of peace and security.

This is why my delegation strongly hopes that this act of faith will be translated into tangible actions and into results that are palpable for all. This is precisely what the Secretary-General invited us to consider in highlighting in his report of last March the indivisibility of the three pillars of development, security and human rights.

Therefore, we must all act. For us, a developing country, acting means implementing strategies that will be beneficial for development, supported by clear-sighted policies of good governance and the rule of law including all sectors of society. And for the developed countries this means scrupulously honouring the commitments undertaken in terms of resolving the question of debt, promoting a just and equitable trade and improving the volume and quality of aid mechanisms.

By the historic decisions that it is calling for, the agenda established by the summit confirms eloquently the firmness of the commitments of heads of State and Government to focus on fighting for development, whose ultimate goal is the harmonious integration of developing countries in the globalization process. However, the heavy interdependence of the world economy and the demands for peace naturally call for a real global partnership, which includes a sharing of responsibilities and takes into account the specific needs of developing countries.

Nevertheless, the desired increase in assistance to developing countries is not a sufficient condition for them to have lasting inclusion in the globalization process. We also need to rationalize this assistance and to improve the delivery mechanisms. Indeed, despite the recent measures of debt cancellation for certain African countries and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, the debt burden continues to hamper any improvement in the economies of developing countries, which now find themselves in perpetual dependence on donors.

Clearly, Africa is falling further and further behind the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and will continue to do so if its debt burden is not drastically alleviated. Since the mechanisms planned for bringing the continent out of debt have not yet borne fruit, we should, apart from the partial measures which we should welcome, envisage bolder and more durable solutions.

Based on this concern, the African ministers of finance met to discuss the strategy for debt reduction in Africa in May of this year in Dakar, under the aegis of the African Union. This was in preparation for a conference during which the President of the Republic of Senegal, His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, proposed to the African Union that it conduct an "x-ray" of African debt.

The economic recovery of the developing countries is all the more delayed in that they continue, helplessly, to be buffeted by an unfair and unbalanced world trade environment due to protectionist policies and export subsidies which distort the whole idea of competitiveness and divert trade from the objective of development. This contributes to making producers in the poor countries more vulnerable and explains the high hopes that we place in the next World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in order to conclude the Doha cycle for development and design a multilateral trade system that is non-discriminatory and equitable for all. We welcome the particular attention being given increasingly to dealing with the specific needs of Africa in the international development agenda.

Unfortunately, we cannot fail to deplore the fact that, paradoxically, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted by this Assembly, continues to suffer from a deficit in implementation due partly to internal inertia and to slow multilateral support, particularly in terms of financial disbursements.

I would like here once again to make a serious appeal to States and to the agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to make concrete their commitments to help Africa implement NEPAD — this ambitious programme of development.

One of the priority sectors of this programme remains that of information and communication technology. In this respect I should like to welcome the creation — following the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society — of a digital solidarity fund. This Fund, a proposal of President Wade, rapidly became an initiative of the African Union and was adopted in March 2005 by the

international community in Geneva. It is aimed at helping the countries of the South to bridge their digital divide with the North and to promote sustainable development. I should like here to repeat Senegal's invitation to States, local groups, heads of companies and civil society to contribute in cash and in kind to this fund.

The many initiatives to be taken in the next few weeks and months should not let us lose sight of the battle that we must wage at the worldwide, regional and national levels to defeat pandemics of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and polio, which are decimating our populations. As regards HIV/AIDS, the Government of Senegal, which devotes more than one-tenth of its budget to health, will continue through bold actions based on information, education, awareness campaigns, prevention and subsidies to fight pandemics tirelessly.

However, the encouraging results achieved by several countries, including Senegal, which has managed to keep the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS at one of the lowest levels in the continent, cannot be consolidated without substantial and consistent support from international partners. Allow me to remind the General Assembly of the good news announced just a few weeks ago of the prevalence rate in my country falling from 1.7 per cent to 0.7 per cent.

I would also like to invite the international community to support Africa in its fight against drepanocytosis — otherwise known as sickle cell anaemia — which has become a public health problem in several countries. This disease, apart from the suffering that it inflicts on the populations, is an obstacle to development in that it makes sufferers unable to work. For that reason the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Sirte from 2 to 5 July, adopted a decision supporting the inclusion of genetic drepanocytosis on the list of priorities for public health. I would thus invite the Assembly to join this battle against drepanocytosis.

Equally vital is the willingness of our external partners to commit themselves with Africa to finding a solution to the situation of its agriculture, which continues to suffer from an environment that is increasingly hostile to the flourishing of design capacities and to transfers of technology central to their development. This is the thrust of the initiative of the Dakar Agricultural Forum, launched by President Wade, the first meeting of which was held in February 2005 in Dakar on the topic "The world agricultural divide: opening up prospects for agricultural areas in development".

This Forum was an opportunity for a productive exchange of views and ideas among officials in the sector, representatives of professional organizations, non-governmental organizations, multinational companies, scientists and academics from all continents. The Forum considered the possibilities of partnerships in order to reduce the agricultural divide between North and South by using science and the transfer of technology, and discussed successful agricultural experiments submitted and presented at Dakar by experts from several countries. By initiating this project in Dakar, the Government of Senegal sought to stimulate thought on an original concept of development, taking into account the political, technical and sociological constraints peculiar to the countries of the South.

Another challenge that has a negative impact on agriculture is desertification, which affects nearly one third of the African continent. There was a meeting of experts from more than 30 countries in Dakar from 26 to 29 July to discuss this problem. That meeting was held on the initiative of President Wade, in accordance with a mandate from his African peers, to consider developing the Sahara and its boundaries in the Sahel. As President Wade said, it is a question of "having a good, hard look at the Sahara" and thinking about the creation of a High Authority of the Sahara based on the American model of the Tennessee Valley Authority, which was a successful example of integrated development.

We should like here to invite the international community, which decided to proclaim 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, to participate in this important work of constructing what has been called by President Wade and his brother and friend, President Olusegun Obasanjo, the "Great Green Wall of Africa", to slow the advance of the desert. As President Wade has said, "Either the desert or the human being — one will have to disappear." We hope that it will be the desert.

Certainly, the struggle to promote development should go hand in hand with another fight, that for a world where peace, security and the scrupulous respect of human rights and individual freedoms reigns. This is

why my country fully supports the important conclusions of the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting, relating in particular to the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, the restructuring of the Security Council, the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission and of a Human Rights Council, and also the adoption of the fundamental principle of the responsibility to protect.

From this rostrum, the President of Senegal, on the question of the expansion of the Security Council, recently made a strong appeal that, first, the historic injustice done to Africa — the only region of the world missing from the group of permanent members of the Security Council — be redressed. Certainly, our continent would like at the end of the process to receive two permanent seats in the Council, two thirds of whose agenda, unfortunately, is devoted to Africa. However, the proposal of Senegal — a country that defends the spirit of compromise with other interest groups — to put Africa at the beginning and at the end of the expansion of the Security Council, deserves the attention of the entire international community.

There is no doubt that the full implementation of the conclusions of the High-level Plenary Meeting will make it possible for our Organization to connect better to the realities of this new century. However, the fine prospects that have been opened up by the Meeting should not make us forget the serious impact of the painful situations to which our world has been a helpless observer for many years. I would just mention three such situations: the disturbing deadlock in negotiations in the area of disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament; terrorism; and the bogging down and lack of headway in the peace process in the Middle East.

It is not yet too late for the "argument of power" — and nuclear power, which I have just set out here — to yield to the "power of argument" of shared peace, so that weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical or biological — can be definitively banned.

As regards terrorism, the recent attacks on London and on Sharm el-Sheikh are painful reminders of the persistence of an evil that can only be eliminated through determined and decisive mobilization by the international community. This response is all the more timely since the terrorist hydra attacks the sanctity of life, defies all reason and undermines the foundations of the rights and freedoms of the individual. It is the view of Senegal that, quite frankly, there is no cause sufficiently just or sufficiently good to justify the use of terrorism and the massacre of women, children and innocent civilians.

Last but not least, the Middle East continues to send us daily images of a seemingly endless tragedy for the Palestinian people. We note the reluctance of the occupying Power, Israel, to respect the spirit and the letter of the road map, which has been seen in the recent settlements established in "Greater Jerusalem", accompanied by destruction of houses belonging to Palestinians and the refusal to give them authorization to reunite their families. And we see it once again in the Israeli plan to link East Jerusalem with the settlement of Ma`aleh Adumim in the West Bank.

The international community must redouble its efforts and vigilance to put an end to the harsh actions against the Palestinians including the construction of the separation wall and the settlements, and take measures to enable both parties to work to conclude rapidly a mutually advantageous peace.

In advocating justice, it seems inconceivable that the Republic of China on Taiwan, with its 23 million inhabitants and its impressive economic dynamism, should be kept out of the United Nations.

Thus, we express the hope that, finally, peace will reign in all regions of the world, particularly in Africa. This is why we welcome the fact that countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia or Burundi, despite conflict, are emerging from crisis and embarking on the path to reconciliation and reconstruction.

I would like to add just one last word on Guinea-Bissau. For us, Guinea-Bissau has met its commitments as regards the international community, proving its maturity and its attachment and dedication to peace. It is thus for the international community to accompany this process now under way in Bissau. To that end, the meeting of donors planned for November should be held without conditions and should lead to substantial material and financial support so as to help the people of Guinea-Bissau continue to take charge of their destiny.

I should like to conclude on this point and pay warm tribute to Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, for his restructuring efforts to make the OIC a modern

and effective organization more capable of strengthening cooperation within the Islamic Oumah and contributing to the fight against underdevelopment.

In this noble fight, my country, Senegal, remains more determined than ever to work with all of its partners in order to bring about a fairer, more peaceful and more prosperous world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marco Vinicio Vargas, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mr. Vinicio Vargas (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the President on his well-deserved election to preside over the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. The session that he is chairing is special because of its scope and the importance of its issues, particularly in view of the unfinished mandates and unfulfilled hopes of the 2005 summit.

We cannot conceal our dissatisfaction with the summit's outcome. In some areas, such as development and human rights, the outcome document reflects less than the international community's least common denominator. In others, such as disarmament and impunity, the final document is a real step back. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we should neglect our commitment to the reform of the United Nations.

We must avoid past mistakes in order to ensure the success of the next round of negotiations. The General Assembly must set realistic goals, avoiding expectations that cannot be met or accepting artificial deadlines that create undue pressure on the negotiations and must not be distracted by secondary issues. The negotiation process must be open, inclusive and transparent, so that all States may be free to participate and contribute actively. We must not yield to the temptation of creating closed negotiating groups that can make private and non-transparent arrangements. We must prevent small groups of States from imposing their own national ambitions upon others. The Secretariat must remain totally impartial. And finally, we must see to it that decisions are made by democratic means in conformity with the rules of procedure.

Such principles must be borne in mind particularly when we consider the possible reform of the Security Council. In the last few months, we devoted a disproportionate amount of time and effort to the question of Security Council reform, to the detriment of other equally important issues. During the present Assembly session, we must give equal emphasis to the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and the negotiation of the comprehensive convention on terrorism, in addition to the reform of the Security Council. We deem it necessary to revitalize the Working Group on the reform of the Security Council so that we may work together towards a consensus solution.

We reaffirm our commitment to Security Council reform in order to make it more democratic and more transparent and effective, on the basis of the principles of sovereign equality among States, rotation, periodic elections and accountability. Therefore, we cannot accept having new permanent members which, due to their permanent status, cannot be held to account and which cannot be replaced if their performance is found wanting. We would only favour an increase in the number of non-permanent members of the Council, with a possibility of re-election.

At the same time, we support reforming the Security Council's working methods so that it may be more responsive to the requirements and needs of the great majority of Member States. It is indispensable to limit the undemocratic instrument of the veto, which erodes the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council. The veto is unacceptable, especially in cases of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and massive violations of human rights. Regrettably, the proposal to eliminate the veto in such cases was not included in the summit's outcome. This question will have to be reconsidered in the coming months in the context of Security Council reform.

We should focus also on the accountability of the Security Council to the broader membership. Insofar as the Council acts on behalf of all Member States, it should submit special reports to the General Assembly, pursuant to Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter, every time that it establishes or substantially modifies the mandate of a peacekeeping mission, every time that it imposes sanctions or other measures of general application under Chapter VII of the Charter, and every time that a draft resolution is vetoed. The General Assembly should consider such reports with a view to further action when necessary.

Furthermore, the Security Council must adopt measures to ensure full respect for human rights and, in particular, the right to due process of persons included on lists of sanctions committees. The work of the Security Council must serve as an example of the highest standards of human rights and due process at the international level.

My delegation wholeheartedly supports all efforts to strengthen the international mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights. We fully support the idea of transforming the Commission on Human Rights into a Human Rights Council. We had hoped that the outcome document would contain specific provisions on the structure and mandate of the new Council. In their absence, we should devote the next few months to designing this new institution. We particularly deem it necessary to ensure that the composition of the new Council reflects an equitable geographical distribution and that its mandate may favour expert consideration of issues, avoiding unnecessary politicization. It is also necessary to draw a distinction between the mandate of the new Council and the work of the General Assembly's Third Committee.

We support the idea to increase substantially the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We are greatly interested in the idea of submitting a single report to all of the monitoring mechanisms established under the various human rights treaties. In order to protect persons with disabilities, we believe it necessary to conclude as soon as possible the convention on protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

In the next few months, this General Assembly should also devote itself to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. In our view, this new Commission should be a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, maintaining an appropriate functional relationship with the Security Council. Its members, we believe, should be elected, and the body should be open to all States that are making an effective contribution to peace. Therefore, we are opposed to having permanent members of the Security Council automatically become members of the new Commission. Such an unjustifiable privilege would be one more example of the cascade effect. Similarly, we are opposed to extending the right of veto to the work of the new Commission. We believe that in its decision-making the Commission should apply the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

We are convinced that the United Nations should play a key role in the efforts to fight international terrorism. Pursuant to the summit's outcome document, in the coming months the General Assembly should design a comprehensive strategy against terrorism and adopt concrete measures to strengthen and enhance coordination in the Organization on this matter. In this context, we would like to repeat the proposal made last year by the President of Costa Rica, His Excellency Mr. Abel Pacheco de la Espriella, to create a United Nations High Commissioner on Terrorism, as an independent, professional and permanent mechanism at the heart of the Secretariat to ensure greater coordination and better use of the resources available at the global level to fight terrorism.

We also support the conclusion of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism by the end of this year. That draft convention already contains a technical and precise definition of the crime of terrorism, which will enhance judicial and police cooperation on the basis of the principle of "prosecute or extradite".

We highlight the importance of law and justice in international relations, and thus we reaffirm our confidence in the International Court of Justice as the best mechanism for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Thus, we urge all nations to accept, without any conditions, the jurisdiction of the Court. We call upon States that may have entered reservations in their declarations of acceptance of the jurisdiction of the Court to withdraw them.

We reaffirm our support for the International Criminal Court as an indispensable mechanism to prevent and punish the most serious crimes against mankind. We are particularly pleased at the fact that the delegation of Costa Rica will in the next few months preside over the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute.

This year's negotiations on disarmament and non-proliferation have yielded unsatisfactory results. In particular, we believe that the General Assembly should begin preparations for the review conference of the United Nations Programme of Action to Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which will be held in mid-2006. That conference

should incorporate, in the implementation of its Programme of Action, a human rights perspective and the six global principles of the draft framework convention on international arms transfers.

Regarding development, we reiterate our appeal to implement the Millennium Development Goals and urge developed countries to fulfil their commitments to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to development assistance and to do away with all barriers and subsidies that have a negative impact on the exports of developing countries.

Specific measures must be adopted to enhance prevention and assistance in case of natural disasters. In this context, I would like to recall that the Sachs report identified Central America and the Caribbean as the region with the highest vulnerability indices to natural disasters. Similarly, it is indispensable to bear in mind the importance of ecologically sustainable development. In this context, I would like to highlight the initiative of creating a "Rainforest Coalition", led by Costa Rica and Papua New Guinea, with a view to protecting all forests and ensuring payment for the environmental services that they provide. We must recall that tropical forests benefit mankind as a whole by sequestering the carbon dioxide produced by industry. Unfortunately, the Kyoto Protocol does not provide incentives to developing countries to protect primary tropical forests. We believe that this omission in the Kyoto Protocol must be remedied.

Regarding management, and with a view to safeguarding the unique legitimacy of this Organization, we deem it indispensable to strengthen the United Nations monitoring and inspection mechanisms, and we request that the General Assembly consider in depth the recommendations of the Volcker report. It is indispensable to face with absolute transparency the cases of mismanagement and alleged corruption that have surfaced within the Organization in recent months.

The President returned to the Chair.

We believe that the General Assembly should seriously consider the question of the representation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations. There is no doubt that the Republic of China on Taiwan could contribute to the work of the Organization. Incorporating the Republic of China on Taiwan into the community of nations is also necessary so that it may fully assume the rights and duties that arise from the various legal regimes of global governance in areas as varied as collective security, development assistance, the fight against terrorism, sustainable development and the various international health mechanisms.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Costa Rica's unconditional commitment to the principles and purposes of the Organization, reaffirming our faith in the United Nations as the principle instrument of the international community to maintain peace, and renewing our full confidence in the Organization's capability to promote human rights and the well-being of all peoples.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, chairman of the delegation of Saint Lucia and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Hunte (Saint Lucia): Saint Lucia supported your unanimous election, Sir, to be President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, confident that your diplomatic skills and experience are just what we need to ensure a positive outcome of this historic sixtieth anniversary session. I congratulate you and the Government and people of Sweden on behalf of the delegation of Saint Lucia and on my own behalf and pledge our cooperation to you in our common endeavour.

My Government and delegation also extend our thanks to your predecessor in office, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, for his stewardship of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, charged as it was with the preparatory work for this sixtieth anniversary.

In these times, when the demands on the United Nations are significant and increasing, resources limited and we, the Member States, are called upon to strengthen our cooperation and keep detractors and cynics of the Organization at bay, my Government wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continuing support for the work of the United Nations.

In this sixtieth year of the United Nations, our world is certainly not the prosperous and peaceful one built on the unity and strength of nations that the Charter envisaged. Should we conclude, therefore, that had the United Nations exerted more authoritative influence in global affairs, our twenty-first century world would be a better one? Such an assertion seems plausible in today's world, replete with poverty and

hunger, disease, lack of sustainable development, human rights violations, terrorism, conflict and war, glaring inadequacies and a multitude of other grave problems, including the unfinished agenda on decolonization.

The record of the United Nations, however, does not bear out so simplistic an assertion. If we look with historical retrospection at the Organization's record, we see that it has wielded enormous influence over the years. The challenge that we Member States must take up at this sixtieth anniversary is to ensure that the United Nations, the key Organization in global affairs, has the authority and prestige to anticipate and meet challenges of the nature and scale we are witnessing in today's world.

Development is foremost among the challenges that Member States have identified for urgent attention during this sixtieth anniversary. There is logic in this approach. A significant proportion of the critical problems that the world faces now and in the future is intrinsically linked to development. It is for this reason that heads of State or Government, in their Millennium Declaration, defined succinctly what must be done to advance socio-economic development in areas of vital concern.

As we know, this comprehensive blueprint underpins the Millennium Development Goals. The global leadership was sufficiently confident to place their Goals within specified time frames, understanding as they did the desperate need for improvement in the socio-economic conditions in numerous developing countries.

What will we, the Member States of this United Nations, say to the people of the developing world grappling with poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases, illiteracy, gender discrimination and other challenges if, by the date set, we have not met the targets of the Millennium Development Goals? My Government sees no merit in the discussion as to whether target dates should have been set. Our orientation should now be towards accelerating the pace of implementation so that the Goals can be accomplished within agreed time frames, or better still even earlier than the target dates.

The United Nations must also show the people of the developing world that comprehensive measures are being taken to address the environment and sustainable development. Natural disasters of phenomenal proportions — from Hurricane Ivan in the Caribbean to the tsunami in Asia and now to Hurricane Katrina in the southern United States — have brought death and destruction to developing and developed countries alike. I take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and people of Saint Lucia to extend our sympathy to the Government of the United States for the tragedy still unfolding in the Gulf Coast states.

Resource-rich developed countries are better positioned to mitigate the impact of natural disasters, although they too are not without their challenges. For developing countries, however, including Saint Lucia and other small island developing States in the Caribbean and Pacific, decades of progress can be obliterated in the course of a few hours by one hurricane or typhoon. Beyond doubt the environment is a critical element of the United Nations development agenda. It is a compelling reason for all to sign on to the Kyoto Protocol.

It is also in our common interest to meet all the commitments made in the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development. In many instances, however, expectations are not being realized. Developing countries still cannot rely on wide-ranging development cooperation and assistance and debt reduction responses that are predictable and reliable. Needless to say my Government joins in urging the developed countries that have not already done so to meet the 0.7 per cent target. We recognize the G-8 initiative to take enhanced measures for Africa's development and hope that that initiative would be speedily implemented.

Related to concern for the development and well-being of all the world's people, the Government of Saint Lucia commends the establishment of the $1 billion emergency fund to be finalized later this year, which will enable the Organization to more quickly and effectively respond to humanitarian crises.

This sixtieth anniversary provides us with yet another opportunity to give impetus to initiatives to spread the benefits of globalization and trade liberalization more widely. Priority must be given to ensuring that all developing countries benefit from freer world trade, that a decline in their trade sector be halted and reversed and that the competition they face in the world economy be on a level playing field.

I am really tired of saying this — that one size cannot fit all, an indisputable fact that the World Trade

Organization stubbornly refuses to acknowledge with respect, inter alia, to bananas and sugar in Caribbean Community and small island developing States. Indeed, the cause of development would be greatly enhanced by a positive outcome from the next round of the Doha trade negotiations scheduled for Hong Kong, China, in December 2005, and an early and successful conclusion of the round overall, hopefully in 2006.

Developing countries must be equal partners in this process, and together with the developed countries take the decisive action required at the World Trade Organization.

What my Government seeks to emphasize by drawing attention to the development imperative is that the time has come for a paradigm shift in the United Nations approach to development. For more than a decade we have, through a series of United Nations summits and conferences in the economic and social fields, formulated an agreed framework of a United Nations development agenda, which includes the Millennium Development Goals.

To these we have now added the outcome document of the sixtieth anniversary summit. Are these courses of action that we have agreed upon to be regarded as mere platitudes, destined to be relegated to the archives of the United Nations? The developing countries have communicated through the Group of 77 and China that the partnership and cooperation of the countries of the developed world, and indeed all stakeholders, are urgently needed to accelerate action and implementation of the United Nations development agenda. This sixtieth anniversary, we believe, has a responsibility to launch this process afresh and to carry out the commitments that we have made in this development agenda.

A more influential Economic and Social Council and a United Nations development system that is strong and cohesive would ensure that the Organization implements its development mandate effectively.

Making the United Nations responses equal to its challenges through reform and revitalization was an important element of our deliberations in the preparatory process for this sixtieth anniversary.

Let me say that my Government is prepared to actively work together with other Member States to set precise and unambiguous mandates for new or reconstituted bodies, including a Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council, on the basis of consensus. It is our considered opinion however that a credible process of United Nations reform must result in a strong General Assembly, the Organization's sole universal organ from which no Member State can be or is excluded.

We can ill afford to further erode the General Assembly's role and authority, since the Charter confirms in a practical sense the importance of the Assembly by the expansive mandate that it has been given in areas that include the maintenance of international peace and security. No other organ has been given such broad responsibilities nor has the potential to deliver over such a wide range of Charter ideals. We are also convinced that a strong General Assembly would enhance the credibility and standing of the United Nations as a whole. Therefore, the momentum of General Assembly revitalization must be maintained, and our efforts in this area must be as dynamic and flexible as are the forces shaping today's world.

Reform of the Security Council has also been a major preoccupation in the lead up to this sixtieth anniversary, as it has been for some 12 years. An indisputable case has been made for the expansion of the Council to reflect the exponential growth of the United Nations membership from 51 in 1945 to 191 today. We all know that the obstacle to moving beyond this point is the diverging and strongly held views about whether an expanded membership should include new permanent members. Again this is an issue that my Government would wish to see resolved by consensus.

Perhaps this matter might be put into better perspective if we were to reflect on the role and function of the United Nations as a whole. Within the broad range of human endeavours entrusted to the Organization, the Charter gives the Security Council one specific, albeit critical, mandate — that is, the maintenance of international peace and security. My Government is of the view that it was not intended for this collective security mandate to be carried out by the Security Council functioning as an independent and separate entity, but rather to be carried out in cooperation with the United Nations as a whole, and certainly in tandem with the General Assembly, where all Member States of this Organization have a voice and a vote. After all, global peace and security concern all citizens of the world, not just the citizens of those

countries who happen at any given time to hold seats on the Security Council.

For the present, war and conflict loom large, and this must be of concern to the Council. But we must hold out hope that we, the Member States of this Organization, can make its constituent parts — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the development system and other organs and agencies, and particularly the Security Council — work together to substantially reduce, if not eliminate, war, conflict and crises.

We must also ask ourselves, what is the nature of the membership that the Council requires to implement its mandate? Far more than any consideration, it is the commitment — and I underscore the word "commitment" — of the Council's membership, permanent or non-permanent, to enforcing its decisions — all of them — to responding to situations that threaten international peace and security wherever they may arise and to combating the insidious spread of international terrorism that determines the success of the Council's work.

We can no longer posture and bicker while the people of the world wait, particularly the people of the developing world, who so desperately need the United Nations. We must take the historic opportunity that this sixtieth anniversary presents to set our sights on a twenty-first century world framed in the ideals enshrined in the Charter, a world of prosperity, peace and security, with a strong United Nations at its core. We need the United Nations. It has the unmitigated support of the Government and people of Saint Lucia.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Kalfin (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, most warmly on the occasion of your election to this important post. The tireless support of Bulgaria for your mission will be among the most active, and I would like to express the profound gratitude of my country to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for his remarkable work and his real courage.

Following the best traditions in Bulgarian foreign policy, the new Bulgarian Government is deeply attached to the principle of multilateralism in international relations, and thus believes in the central nature of the United Nations as the only intergovernmental organization that is completely universal and extremely representative of the peoples of the world. Bulgaria is participating in the sixtieth session of the General Assembly as a country that has signed the Treaty of Accession to the European Union and acts with the status of active observer in the bodies and institutions of the European Union. My country has unreservedly supported the positions of the European Union during the preparatory work for the summit that has just taken place, and we fully support the analysis of the outcome document made by the United Kingdom presidency.

The main purpose of this debate is to implement the decisions of the summit. I hope that each Member State will help to push forward reform in the United Nations, as set out in the outcome document (resolution 60/1). Substantial progress has been made in many key areas, and this is a good basis for the work of the sixtieth session. However, we are obliged to note with regret that some of the ambitious and innovative ideas in the report of the Secretary-General, "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), welcomed and endorsed by Bulgaria, could not be adopted. We need to redouble our efforts so that these ideas can come to pass. Bulgaria supports the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan in this respect and expresses the hope that his valuable contribution will continue.

In parallel with the sixtieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations, my country is also celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its membership in the United Nations family. Over the last 50 years, the challenges facing humanity have increased in complexity and diversity, and the threats facing us tend to interweave and compound each other in a manner never seen before. However, just as 50 years ago, it is the human being who is at the centre of our attention as the supreme value, the human being with his individual security and his right to a life of dignity and happiness.

The summit that has just concluded in New York has revived hope that the struggle to eradicate poverty, hunger and epidemics and to protect the environment can be won. The condition is that we need to mobilize the maximum amount of efforts and the maximum resources so that we can implement a real global partnership between the developed and developing countries. We support the European Union's position of increasing official development assistance.

As a candidate for membership in the Economic and Social Council for 2007 to 2009, Bulgaria has decided to make its contribution to activities of the United Nations in the social and economic areas.

The summit outcome document defines HIV/AIDS as being one of the greatest threats to humanity. Efforts of the entire international community are required in order to counter it. Children and young people are the most affected. The case of the Libyan children, contaminated with the HIV/AIDS virus in a hospital, is a tragedy deserving our compassion and our support. Bulgaria welcomes the adoption of appropriate measures to avoid such tragedies in the future. It will participate actively in the European Union's plan of action, which it has just published, aimed at limiting the consequences of the epidemic of HIV/AIDS in Libya.

My country supports the emergence of a new consensus in the United Nations relating to the chief threats to international peace and security and collective action against such threats. Bulgaria categorically condemns terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations. No cause can justify violence against innocent people. The United Nations has a leading and irreplaceable role in creating a global environment of intolerance and rejection of terrorism.

For that reason, my delegation will support unconditionally the adoption during the sixtieth session of an anti-terrorist strategy. It is in the context of this strategy that we should seek lasting and long-term solutions to the political, economic and social causes fuelling this phenomenon. Bulgaria also insists that a common definition of terrorism be developed, making it possible to adopt a convention on international terrorism. It is clear that in order to combat terrorism effectively we need to neutralize all ideologies advocating terrorism. In that respect, we actively support initiatives that facilitate coexistence and dialogue between different civilizations, religions, ethnic groups and cultures.

Bulgaria profoundly regrets that the problem of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was not included in the summit outcome document, and we associate ourselves with the Secretary-General's appeal to continue efforts in this priority area for our collective security.

Bulgaria has wholeheartedly supported the idea of creating a Peacebuilding Commission since its inception. The creation of this body is one of the most important decisions of the summit. Allowing the Commission to begin its work as soon as possible will greatly increase the ability of the United Nations to consolidate the positive effects of peacekeeping operations. In each specific case, the Peacebuilding Commission cannot but benefit from the contribution from neighbouring countries and also from interested regional organizations.

As a country in South-Eastern Europe, Bulgaria has been working tirelessly over the last few decades for the transformation of the potential for conflict in the Western Balkans into good-neighbourliness, cooperation and development. We are convinced that stability and prosperity in this region are ultimately indissolubly linked with the European perspective for the Western Balkans. The risks of military confrontation are decreasing, and what we have seen recently is the emergence of new forms of cooperation between States with the consolidation of democratic institutions, civil societies and rule of law in the common fight against organized crime and corruption. For my country such forms of cooperation are a priority also as regards the States of the region of the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia.

The international community is on the threshold of a crucial decision for the future of Kosovo. The situation there is an example of a long and sometimes painful post-conflict settlement with the leadership of the United Nations, and in partnership with the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Reaching a just and lasting solution cannot ignore European norms and values. It must guarantee the rights of all of the inhabitants of the region without distinction as to their ethnic origin, their religious beliefs and language. This solution must be based on a respect of the territorial integrity of neighbouring countries and must contribute to regional security and stability. For Bulgaria the future of Kosovo lies in a unified Europe, and this can be achieved solely through the implementation of standards established by the Security Council.

Bulgaria supports the efforts of the Government and the people of Iraq on the difficult road to peace, security and economic recovery. The conclusion of the constitutional process provided for by Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) is the sole means of achieving this. We have no doubt that the adoption of the new Iraqi constitution will make it possible to overcome

existing divisions and will be a cornerstone for constructing an Iraqi State that is unified, democratic and guarantees the rule of law. For its part, Bulgaria will continue to give its support to the Iraqi people in their efforts to build a democratic, completely independent future.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My country welcomes the positive trends that have been emerging in the process of consolidating the Afghan State, which the recent parliamentary elections have strikingly confirmed. Bulgaria will continue its contribution to the efforts of the international community to stabilize Afghanistan. We are continuing our assistance to the Afghan army.

We agree with those who highlight the need to focus the attention of the international community on Africa. There is no doubt that a priority for the United Nations must be the settlement of regional and local conflicts on this continent, combating poverty, and the transition to sustainable development. The role of the African Union here is irreplaceable.

For Bulgaria the protection and the promotion of human rights are priorities of the United Nations, as are the problems of development and security. We welcome the decision taken by the summit to create a Human Rights Council. In our view this Council should sit permanently and be elected directly by the General Assembly with a set majority. Its status should be higher than that of the existing Commission on Human Rights. The role of this new body would be to develop and improve the current practices of the Commission, particularly by regularly reviewing the state of human rights in all countries of the world while being ready to react in cases of grave and serious violations of human rights. In this respect Bulgaria repeats its support for the Democracy Fund, which could encourage the democratic process in countries that need it and that wish to be helped in this area. My country is now evaluating its national contribution to this Fund.

Over the last few days in this Hall we have had a discussion on the protection of human rights worldwide. In this respect I cannot but mention a case that is of particular concern for Bulgarian public opinion. This involves the destiny of the five Bulgarian nurses and one Palestinian doctor condemned to death by a Libyan court in Benghazi. The innocence of the accused has been categorically confirmed by leading scientists in the field of HIV/AIDS. Bulgaria still insists that a just and fair decision be taken by the Supreme Court of Libya on 15 November.

The consensus that has emerged on the concept of the "responsibility to protect" during the negotiations on the outcome document of the summit is a real breakthrough. It makes possible joint action by all Members of the United Nations in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing and other mass crimes against humanity when national authorities refuse to act or are unable to protect their citizens.

I am convinced that we are on the threshold of the most important and boldest reforms of the United Nations in its history. Only the collective will of all Member States can open the way to real change. The stakes are enormous: allow the United Nations to establish its reputation as the universal world Organization capable of proving once again its vitality in the face of the challenges of globalization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Alsaidi, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Government of the Republic of Yemen believes that the principles of the Charter of the United Nations form the cornerstone of its ability to tackle all problems at the national, regional and international levels. Ever since it was created, it has strived to create a climate of security and stability in the region by demarcating Yemen's land and sea borders by peaceful means and by its devotion to the principle of well-balanced diplomacy and dialogue in the settlement of its disputes with others. It has fostered a partnership with neighbouring countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the San'a community for development, as well as its active contribution to the League of Arab States.

Yemen has played a pioneering role with regard to political reform and the multiparty system and has enabled women to participate actively in the political, economic and social life of the country. Yemen is in the process of preparing for direct presidential elections, as well as elections for local administrative councils, in order to enhance democracy and promote people's participation in the administration of the country and in achieving decentralization by next September.

Yemen would like to thank the international development agency for its support in this connection, as well as those States that have supported our democracy. We hope, however, that we will be receiving more financial and technical support for the high electoral commission to enable it to efficiently carry out its work.

In light of terrorist acts in a number of countries of the region and throughout the world, the Republic of Yemen wishes to reaffirm its clear-cut position that there is a need to have joint responsibility in our struggle against terrorism. We will cooperate with all States and international organizations to deal with this danger and to develop ways for exchanging information, particularly with regard to the sources of financing for terrorism and the prosecution of the guilty parties. We firmly believe that we should convene an international conference on terrorism to arrive at a clear definition of the phenomenon, which would draw a distinction between terrorism and the right of peoples to self-determination and to resist foreign occupation of their territories. We also condemn all forms of terrorism against innocent and defenceless civilians.

The expansion of poverty and diseases and the lack of education and health services for millions of people in Africa and Asia constitutes a time bomb threatening international peace and security. Establishing peace and stability and putting an end to extremism and terrorism are goals that cannot be achieved unless rich States revise their economic and political policies and provide support to achieve peace and development. That would enable millions of people to recover their dignity and humanity. In this context, the Republic of Yemen wishes to reaffirm its support for the proposal made by the King of Saudi Arabia, Guardian of the Two Holy Sites, for the creation of an international centre to fight terrorism.

The Republic of Yemen is of the view that the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from the Gaza Strip is a first step on a long path. We reaffirm our belief that this withdrawal is but a part of the road map that should be considered as an integrated comprehensive plan that must be implemented as a whole and not dealt with selectively.

In this context, the international community should not be deceived into believing that Israel has made enormous sacrifices by withdrawing from territories occupied by force, or have any sympathy for Israeli settlers who were evacuated, as these settlements were built on land the settlers did not own. Israel should end its occupation of the West Bank, remove all settlements there, and demolish the separation wall in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

The peace process is an indivisible whole. Real peace can only be achieved when all Arab rights have been recovered — first and foremost, the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, in Palestine, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon to the borders of 4 June 1967, the creation of an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian national soil with its capital in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and the just resolution of the refugee problem in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1949. We ask the international Organization and the Quartet not to recognize nor accept any Israeli guarantees or promises that are designed to violate the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and its sovereignty and not to reward Israeli occupation that seeks to impose faits accomplis solutions.

We must carefully consider the situation in Iraq and see what we can do to assist the Iraqi people to achieve its aspirations. There is no doubt that respect for the unity, sovereignty and independence of Iraq, non-interference in its internal affairs, respect for the will of the people of Iraq and their choices in determining their future, are important tasks that this international Organization, as well as the international community, must help and support. The same is true with regard to the need for all sectors of Iraqi society to take part in the political process on the basis of conciliation and national harmony, without jeopardizing Iraq's Arab identity, civilization and heritage. In this context, the people and Government of Yemen welcome the positive and important role taken by the United Nations in support of the constructive political process. It is important for this international Organization to play a central role in order to help complete this process and that of the reconstruction of Iraq.

In the same vein, I reiterate the need to urgently implement Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) in order to allow Iraq to recover its full sovereignty and to put an end to the foreign military presence in that country.

The Republic of Yemen is following with satisfaction the positive events that are occurring in Sudan, which we see as the beginning of a new stage of national reconciliation, peace and stability in the entire country and as the end of the longest conflict in Africa. We appreciate the role played by neighbouring Arab and African States, as well as that by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, for their help in achieving agreement to ensure Sudan's territorial integrity, unity, stability and security. We hope that the international Organization will redouble its efforts to make sure that international financial institutions, funds and States support the process of peace, development and reconstruction throughout Sudan, particularly in the regions that have been ravaged by war.

We are pleased to see progress achieved in Somalia. However, we warn of the possibility of further setbacks in that country. We have no choice but to call upon the United Nations and the international community as a whole to provide urgently needed assistance to the transitional Government in Somalia to enable the Government to carry out its work, particularly with regard to ensuring reconstruction and the rule of law. The participation of United Nations peacekeeping forces has become more necessary now than ever before. Any reluctance in providing such assistance to Somalia will mean that terrorism and the forces of violence and extremism will prevail with most serious consequences to that country, to the Arab world, regionally and internationally.

With regard to my country's position on developing national capabilities in the area of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, we believe that all member States of the International Atomic Energy Agency have the right to develop their nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes, a position that was adopted by the Islamic States at the meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in Sana'a last June.

We further reaffirm the importance of making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and that the prohibition of such weapons should apply to all States of the region, including Israel.

In conclusion, allow me once more to congratulate you, Mr. President, and express my best wishes to the General Assembly, hoping that our common endeavour will be crowned with success so that we can achieve peace, security and prosperity for everyone.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Stuart Beck, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Palau.

Mr. Beck (Palau): Palau warmly congratulates the President on his election to the presidency of the Assembly and assures him of Palau's full support and cooperation. We pay tribute to his predecessor, Jean Ping of the Gabonese Republic, for his effective leadership.

At last week's historic summit, our leaders created an agenda for the world. It is our task to undertake concrete measures to advance that agenda. While the outcome document may not have addressed every issue of importance in a manner that is satisfactory to all, it is inarguably an excellent starting point for the hard work that now lies before us. We must think of it as a floor, rather than a ceiling, for our efforts.

Palau has much to offer and much to gain from a stronger United Nations. We are a new country, this year celebrating our eleventh anniversary as an independent nation and as a Member of the United Nations. As Palau takes its place among the community of nations, a major concern is the development that will enable us to stand on our own. In particular, Palau regards the capacity-building expertise of the United Nations and its agencies as central to these efforts.

As the Secretary-General stated earlier this year in his report "In larger freedom", "one of the great challenges of the new millennium is to insure that all States are strong enough to meet the many challenges they face" (*A/59/2005, para.* 19). He went on to say, "no country, weak or strong, can realize prosperity in a vacuum" (*ibid., para. 24*).

I fear that just such a vacuum exists in many small island developing States and that Palau is one of them. Not a single United Nations representative can be found in Palau to assist the country in moving forward. The United Nations flag does not fly there. So when a youngster wants to know whether a capacity-building internship or scholarship might be available, there is no one to ask. And when a local environmentalist wants to know whether a Global Environmental Facility Small Grant might be available to assist in the preservation of an endangered species

that is important to the whole world, there is no one to help in submitting an application. In like manner, when Palau does its part in ratifying an international agreement, thus accepting the obligation to render complex reports to an international agency, there is no one to help.

The United Nations has attempted to fill this vacuum through the creation of regional and subregional centres, which are quite distant from Palau's shores. While arguably well intentioned, this tactic has failed to provide Palau with the capacity-building required and has, similarly, prevented the world from truly understanding Palau's needs and aspirations. In this sense, these regional and subregional centres merely replicate the colonial regimes, which the Pacific islands have thrown off — distant capitals making decisions about far-flung provinces. To Palau, strengthening the United Nations means strengthening its marginalized Members.

Palau has willingly taken its place as a responsible member of the international community. Heeding the Secretary-General's call to action, Palau this year proudly deployed a contingent of police peacekeepers, who now serve in East Timor. And in response to the Secretary-General's stated desire to develop better gender balance in these missions, Palau's contingent is entirely female.

When the world develops important conventions, often with burdensome reporting requirements, Palau steps up and signs them, as was the case last week when Palau's President Remengesau signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. And when natural disasters strike, Palau responds willingly, making significant financial contributions to remit suffering caused by the tsunami and by Hurricane Katrina. I submit that in both of these cases, Palau's contributions were, on a per capita basis, among the highest in the world.

Palau asks for very little. But now it asks for help, and that help should be forthcoming. As our President Remengesau stated in the Assembly's 4th meeting, last week, in his address to the world summit:

> "It is therefore time for the international community, and the United Nations as its representative, to begin to move beyond studies that recognize past failures to achieve sustainable development in our island nations, and to move aggressively forward and to establish a specific programme agenda that recognizes our unique smallness, that appreciates our distinctive diversity, and that respects our island cultures as equal to those in other nations of this world."

Palau's development challenges are different from those of many of our friends around the world who have taken this podium. Hunger is not an issue at present in paradise. But the challenges that confront the small island nations of the Pacific may ultimately be every bit as devastating as famine.

Climate change and sea-level rise threaten to obliterate our islands. The very poignant and moving statement of His Excellency Anote Tong, Beretitenti of the Republic of Kiribati at the 15th meeting last week contained a chilling preview of what the unchecked scourge of carbon emissions could mean to all of the countries in the Pacific, and of course to many other oceans of the world. The President acknowledged that the Government of Kiribati needed now "to seriously consider the option of having to relocate our peoples when necessary". In this understated Pacific way, the President forces us all to confront a world where whole countries simply disappear from the globe. Is there a more compelling call to action than that?

The period leading up to such a catastrophe is upon us. Palau must rely on the maintenance of its extraordinary reefs and waters and its unparalleled biodiversity to attract tourists. Without these assets, it will be unable to develop a sustainable economy and to create jobs, which will allow its children to live and work in their homeland.

The other pillar of Palau's development is its fisheries. For countless generations, our people have relied on their waters for their sustenance. Now, foreign fishing fleets, which have denuded the waters proximate to their own harbours, have come to the Pacific and threaten to do the same. The very food chain is threatened by new fishing practices that, though in their infancy, have begun to damage Pacific seamounts in ways that the scientific community deems alarming. It is for this reason that Palau has called for a moratorium on deep sea bottom trawling until the scientific community can gauge the long-term impact of that practice. We renew that call today and applaud Costa Rica for its leadership on this important issue.

We take this opportunity and we are grateful for this opportunity to commend Palau's bilateral partners and friends who have overcome our new nation's

remoteness to become involved and knowledgeable about our needs and aspirations. The United States has provided in-country diplomatic representation and years of support for our vital democracy.

Japan has also provided in-country diplomatic representation and invaluable assistance. Like the United States, Japan has been steadily involved in Palau's development, and I would submit that this special familiarity with Palau's people has enhanced Japan and the United States every bit as much as it has aided Palau.

Palau has been disappointed by the failure of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session to accomplish Security Council reform, particularly because Japan's deep knowledge of our region would inform Council members who have less familiarity with the situation of the Pacific islands. We supported and continue to support therefore the Group of Four resolution and hope that the sixtieth General Assembly will finish this critical work that was begun last year.

A third steady supporter of Palau's development has been the Republic of China on Taiwan. We continue to assert that the world would be benefited by Taiwan's membership in this august body. This year Palau was a sponsor of a resolution calling for a proactive role for the United Nations in addressing the rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait. We regret that the debate on that important resolution was foreshortened in the General Committee and that we were prevented from expressing our views on this topic; however we are glad that we have an opportunity to do that now.

The people of the Pacific, and the Pacific island nations themselves, are under-represented in the Secretariat and in the governing bodies, commissions and tribunals of the world. Our cohesive and effective regional group, the Pacific Islands Forum, is most fortunate in having Australia and New Zealand among us. But it is time, we submit, for the new island nations to take a more active role and to share their unique and graceful Pacific way with the rest of the world. It is quite possible, I submit, that the islands are marginalized in part by the irrational composition of the regional groups. Strengthening the United Nations should include a realignment of the groups to better reflect the proliferation of Pacific countries, which has occurred in the last 20 years, and the actual geography of the world. This would allow the island nations to compete more effectively for seats on major bodies. For this reason, Palau suggests the reform of the system and the creation of an East Asia and Pacific Group and that this group include, of course with their consent, our friends in Australia and New Zealand.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ewald Wensley Limon, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Limon (Suriname): It is a distinct honour for me today to address the sixtieth General Assembly of the United Nations. At the outset, please allow me on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname to extend sincere felicitations to the President on his election to preside over this important session. I would like to pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation in the tasks that lie ahead of us in this session.

My delegation would also like to express its gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, for his unwavering efforts in steering the work of the fifty-ninth session. We wish him well in his future endeavours.

We continue to render our support to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, especially for his leadership in the process of restructuring the United Nations.

We are gathered here, in the wake of the High-level Plenary Meeting, in which world leaders adopted some measures to advance the cause of development, human rights and security and the much-needed reform of this world Organization. The task before us is not an easy one. We need to redouble our efforts in implementing the ambitious goals we have set to create a safer and more prosperous world for ourselves and generations to come.

Although the world community made some modest progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, we have to acknowledge that we are far from reaching the global commitments made by world leaders at the dawn of the new millennium to advance economic and social development for the world's poor.

The Government of Suriname remains committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals because we strongly believe that sustainable development is crucial for the achievement of international peace and security.

While we acknowledge our primary responsibility in the development process, we would like to bring to mind the commitments made in Monterrey of establishing a global partnership to advance the development agenda. A substantial increase in financial resources, to be provided on a more predictable basis and free of conditionalities, is needed for this matter.

We commend the various initiatives that have been launched so far, and we would like to call on our developed partners to continue rendering their support to the efforts of developing countries.

Trade can play an important role in promoting economic growth and development, and in that regard we reiterate our position for a trading system that is universal, rule-based, non-discriminatory, open and equitable. We furthermore expect that the upcoming multilateral round of trade negotiations will fully take into account the needs of developing countries.

We would like to note the laudable initiatives of several developed countries for facilitating market access for the least developed countries. However, for many middle-income countries, like Suriname, who are called upon to diversify their economies, measures have yet to be taken to facilitate their market access for goods and services into the markets of the developed countries.

Sixty years ago, in the aftermath of the Second World War, world leaders vowed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and thus came together and established the United Nations. Faced with both old and new challenges to international peace and security, the international community should more than ever be determined to live up to that crucial promise.

The spread of infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the indiscriminate effect of the forces of nature thereby causing widespread despair and destruction, the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons, just to name a few, are testimony of the transnational nature of contemporary challenges the world is facing today.

We therefore need an effective system of international cooperation to collectively deal with both old and new threats to international peace and security.

It is imperative to redress the major setbacks in nuclear disarmament and arms control. We will have failed future generations if we cannot even reach agreement on the general principles governing those important issues.

We cannot but agree with the Secretary-General when he once stated, "There is nothing small or light about the consequences of the uncontrolled spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons" (*A/58/138, p. 4*). In Suriname, as is the case for many countries in the Caribbean region, this phenomenon is associated with drug trafficking and other cross-border criminal activity. In this regard we would like to pledge our support to the ongoing efforts in the United Nations to address this critical issue that threatens the economic and social fabric of our society.

My Government strongly condemns all acts of terrorism committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes. With the growing interdependence in the world, terrorism constitutes a grave danger for rich, poor, large and small countries alike. We would however like to bring to mind that the fight against terrorism should, at all times, take place in accordance with international law and with respect for human rights, tolerance and the peaceful coexistence of people.

The fight against terrorism must address its root causes. Suriname, being a multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural society, believes that increased tolerance and dialogue could make a positive contribution to the goal of increased security.

We therefore continue to support the dialogue among civilizations and remain convinced that a culture of peace can be significantly enhanced through this dialogue in order to promote mutual understanding, respect and tolerance among regions, cultures and peoples.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms remains of great importance to the Government of Suriname. The creation of a Human Rights Council, as was agreed to in the outcome document, should not only result in a renaming of the Commission on Human Rights; we have the daunting task ahead of us of restoring credibility to the human rights machinery by addressing the shortfalls of the Commission on Human Rights and ensuring that the Human Rights Council becomes a more effective and objective organ.

The United Nations should resolve to come to the rescue of people confronted with genocide, ethnic

cleansing and crimes against humanity. We must continue to discuss the framework to be associated with this difficult task. But more importantly, the United Nations, through its Charter provisions, should find ways and means geared towards preventing these atrocities from reoccurring.

The international community has some time ago expressed the need for a more effective and efficient Organization that would be better able to address the many challenges our world is facing today and make it more responsive to the aspirations of the world's people. Suriname continues to believe in the values of the United Nations as the supreme multilateral institution and supports the efforts of strengthening the Organization through reform.

More than ever, good intentions must give rise to concrete achievements. We must translate commitments into action. We owe it to the many people living in extreme poverty who do not have access to safe drinking water and do not have proper health care.

Achieving such a global society requires the involvement, determination and commitment of all actors — State and non-State — as well as coordinated and comprehensive actions by all such actors in the global fight against poverty and injustice.

Our shared objectives require more than a reaffirmation of the importance of the Millennium Development Goals and the availability of financial resources. It requires understanding between developed and developing countries. It requires political will, which is a condition sine qua non in our efforts to achieve our global commitments.

I am convinced that the recently concluded high-level gathering of world leaders generated the renewed political commitment to further the cause of global partnership between the developing and developed countries to promote development and continue the fight against poverty and hunger.

In conclusion, let me remark that we have to act now. We cannot build a world of peace and security without economic and social development and without respect for human rights.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Isikia Rabici Savua, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Savua (Fiji): Fiji extends its warm congratulations to the Organization on the sixtieth anniversary of its existence, and to the President, on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. We wish to express our confidence in his ability to guide our work during 2005 and 2006.

We also extend our appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of the Gabonese Republic, for his outstanding guidance of the difficult business of the fifty-ninth session. We also would like to place on record our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts and active role in bringing about an outcome document that should become the centrepiece that guides our efforts in the many months to come.

Last week the leaders of our States or Governments adopted a resolution on the outcome of their deliberations. The outcome document (resolution 60/1), as anticipated, did not meet the expectations of everyone; rather, it contained those key elements essential to addressing the three pillar issues of security, human rights and development.

What is required of us now is the commitment to support the implementation plan that will be drawn up to convert to action what have up to now been merely hopes and aspirations. We must also undertake to ensure that the assistance so rendered trickles right down to the poor, the hungry, the needy and the hopeless — those that require it the most. Far too often donations, funds and other forms of assistance are mired in the bureaucratic process and reduced by certain percentages, which are then passed off as so-called administrative charges.

Fiji fully endorses the outcome document, and we are committed to implement those provisions that we as a developing nation are required to pursue for ourselves. The formulation and implementation of the Fiji national sustainable development strategy, outlining the visions of our leaders and targeting the aspirations and objectives of the summit outcome and the Millennium Development Goals, is paramount. We are in the process of reforming our public and financial sector and introducing limited changes in the private sector. Infrastructure development and improvement are a priority in light of our occupational health and safety standards. Marine legislation and regulations are being reviewed to ensure the safety at sea of both

passengers and vessels alike, as well as the protection of our maritime resources such as our continental shelf. The principle of restorative justice in pursuit of reconciliation, tolerance and unity is being widely discussed through a democratic process of consultations among the public before it is introduced in Parliament.

Concerning the reform of the United Nations Secretariat, Fiji subscribes to the thinking that the Secretary-General should be empowered to enact the changes he believes best suit the Organization. We must all help to create a United Nations Organization that is more efficient and accountable. Accountability can be achieved by the establishment of the much discussed Oversight Committee, the modalities and working methodology of which have to include clear and transparent terms of reference and a well-balanced regional representation.

The United Nations must function always with integrity and urgent concern for the needs of Member States. Above all we must help the United Nations to concentrate, as never before, on reducing the shameful gap between developed and developing countries.

There should be no pause in United Nations endeavours to establish and maintain international peace, security and stability. The Secretary-General and his staff are to be commended for seeking peace agreements or in trying to prevent disputes from violently escalating. Peacekeepers from many troop-contributing countries deployed to conflict zones are working not only to provide security but also to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former fighters, to permit the safe and sustainable return of refugees and to strengthen human rights and the rule of law.

We commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in trying to promote an inclusive, participatory and transparent political transition process in the country. Fiji is privileged to have our troops serving in UNAMI to help in the process.

Fiji reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations. As always, we are for peace and this is the reason we have sent many of our soldiers and police officers to serve with United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding forces. Many of our servicemen have lost their lives, but we have accepted this ultimate sacrifice as our contribution to the unceasing global effort for finding peace and security.

Further, while fully appreciating the principle of the standby force, we are at the same time concerned by the fact that those nations who are unable to properly equip their forces are mainly from developing countries and will therefore be marginalized should no arrangement be made to assist them in this area. If such assistance is not forthcoming, then peacekeeping will be confined to only a select few countries, mainly developed nations.

Fiji acclaims the proposal for a Peacebuilding Commission. We will gladly share with the Commission our own experiences in reconstructing our country following the civil unrest that almost tore the nation apart in 2000. We ask reconsideration regarding the makeup of the Peacebuilding Commission, for while some of us have served in that sphere longer than others, the size of certain countries' contribution gives them an advantage under the current modalities.

We support the United Nations and other major groups' initiatives at establishing partnerships with regional groups. The South Pacific region has constantly come together to address common problems that may beset its members. The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands is a peacekeeping/peacebuilding mission that was mounted by the region. We would urge the United Nations to kindly assist in the humanitarian effort to bring this regional initiative on an even keel.

Fiji is supportive of an enlarged Security Council membership that reflects current geopolitical realities. We maintain our support for the inclusion of India and Japan as permanent members under revised arrangements.

We look forward to the moment when peace finally reigns in the Middle East, and we commend all those countries that are helping with that global cause. For our Pacific Ocean region, we would like to see the Korean people find just peace and lasting harmony. On the future of Taiwan, it is Fiji's fervent hope that a resolution through dialogue, conducted in the true spirit of reconciliation and understanding and devoid of violence, can be found — one that is agreeable to all parties and that can last for years to come.

This age of globalization is marked by the adoption of universal principles governing such

matters as democracy, human rights, trade and development. Fiji accepts those precepts; there is no question about that. But we also say that countries like ours, undergoing profound transition, should not be held to unrealistic standards. We need time to evolve, to adapt and to adhere. Members should not judge us by what might be appropriate to their standards, but measure us by the progress we are making towards the universal ideals and the level of our commitment to change.

Fiji respects the principle of equality of human rights. We endorse the proposal for a Human Rights Council, directly accountable to the General Assembly, as an improvement upon the present arrangements. However, in order for the Council to be effective, its members have to be as widely representative as possible and should not be subjected to special reporting requirements.

For Fiji, it is vitally important, as a factor for long-term stability, that the special interests of the indigenous people, including their right to ownership of their natural resources, is protected, and that a balance between the rights of individuals and communities is maintained. This has particular relevance for a multicultural society such as ours. In this regard, we strongly endorse the intention to bring to the General Assembly as soon as possible for adoption a final draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

To fund the Millennium Development Goals developing countries ought to have access to markets and a fair return on their exports. This fact is important for Fiji and other small vulnerable States; our very economic survival is dependent upon it. Unrealistic and inequitable world trade policies simply make it much harder for our countries to eliminate poverty.

Fiji commends those developed States that are prepared to assist developing nations in cushioning the impact of World Trade Organization compliance. We pay particular tribute to the European Union for its willingness to assist and call on our European Union partners to provide adequate long-term support as it begins to reduce preferential processes for African, Caribbean and Pacific sugar.

We also would like to express appreciation to our close neighbours Australia and New Zealand and our friends in Asia for their support in helping us get better access to their markets and assistance in other important areas of development.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a global concern as it impacts on our ability to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. A cooperative effort by everyone remains the only way to control and eradicate the scourge. Action that integrates prevention, treatment and the medical and social vulnerability of infected persons should be our guiding principles.

At the same time we should not minimize the seriousness of the ravages produced of other infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. Effort should also be directed at other scourges, such as extreme poverty and the plight of the disabled.

We can no longer ignore the plight of women and children who through the years have been subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse. Last week, Fiji's Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, signed the two Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the first on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the second on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In addition Fiji strongly believes that the time is right for stronger action to be taken to address the issue of young women who are denied the right to sexual and reproductive health.

We welcome the decision to hold a 2006 General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. The amount of remittances from migrant workers has become a rich source of funds and has raised the standards of living of families, contributed substantially to the national economy and provided much needed employment to the job market. Fiji hopes that the High-level Dialogue will be the catalyst to enable countries to work in partnership and agree to a better understanding to improve the conditions of migrant workers.

Terrorism is a blight on all our horizons. It respects no borders, and it is neither an acceptable nor an effective way to advance any cause. Insularity is no longer a cushion to protect islands which believe themselves to be further away from the mainstream of international activities. In trying to fulfil the terms and conditionalities established by the various terrorism conventions, more money that can hardly be spared has to be found to fulfil those obligations. In doing so, efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals are stymied and in some instances halted.

In this regard, a global effort to combat terrorism has to be instituted to include training, funding, transparency in the exchange of information and intelligence, and a pledge to assist when needed.

Fiji will always be in support of all efforts to reform the United Nations and its initiatives in the fields of security, human rights and development. Our efforts will be modest but commensurate with our abilities.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva, chairperson of the delegation of Turkmenistan.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to congratulate the President, on his election to his high post and to express our confidence in his successful and professional implementation of the mandate entrusted to him. Allow me to also express our gratitude to Mr. Jean Ping for his untiring activity in guiding the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Last week the High-level Plenary Meeting concluded its work, which resulted in the adoption of an outcome document, reflecting the Meeting's commitment to attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

The United Nations is an irreplaceable structure of multilateral inter-State interaction. Therefore, the question on how it will respond to the hopes and aspirations of every Member will determine its viability. We agree with the Secretary-General that the Organization "remains fully engaged in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, defence of human rights and development around the world". (*A/60/PV.2*)

We support the proposals contained in the outcome document on strengthening the United Nations in areas of development, ensuring collective security, counteracting terrorism, ensuring the dignity of the individual and reforming the Organization.

We are in favour of strengthening the role of the United Nations, and urge more transparency in its work and an improvement of its structure. The activities of its bodies should be conducted on the basis of a wide consensus among Member States. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at preventing conflicts and strengthening preventive activity in that area.

We support the efforts against terrorism by the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee. Its role is invaluable in coordinating and exchanging information and analysing trends.

The present session is devoted to an appraisal of the progress made by States in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, allow me to share with you information on how Turkmenistan is implementing the Goals.

Reforms are being implemented in Turkmenistan in the economic and social sphere, in accordance with the national programme of social and economic development for the period until 2020. The reforms have assisted in establishing a powerful industrial potential, creating a market model for administration and the private sector of economy, and ensuring dignified living conditions for the people.

Turkmenistan possesses huge energy resources, gas and oil industries being the main sources of development of the national economy. The energy potential of Turkmenistan is currently estimated at more than 45 billion tons of oil equivalent, or a fifth of all world reserves of natural gas and oil.

Thanks to the national programmes developed in the early years of independence, the reforms have introduced a new type of industry. Turkmenistan, by its own national resources, has invested $30 billion in the national economy and has built over 1,050 industrial plants and factories possessing highly sophisticated equipment.

We have been successfully developing new branches of industry, namely, the oil and gas, energy, textile and food sectors. In the textile industry, we have established new specialized companies and large integrated textile plants, organizing large-scale production of various cotton fibre products, 60 per cent of which is exported. The textile industry represents 28 per cent of the overall volume of production of our manufacturing industry.

The agrarian sector of the economy has undergone complete reconstruction. Since the middle of 1995, all collective and State farms have been abolished. Reform has been directed at transferring land to private ownership and long-term lease and expanding the areas of privately-held lots. The Government has undertaken measures to stimulate private agricultural production. Half of the cost of

technical services is borne by the State. The population has been exempted from payment of taxes on land, houses, construction and the maintenance of cattle and poultry. All these and other measures have strengthened agriculture and have stimulated a growth in production.

This year Turkmenistan harvested a record 3.1 million tons of wheat. At the current stage of development, consumer demand in our country is met mainly by domestic production, practically ensuring food independence for the country.

Turkmenistan attaches great importance to the creation and expansion of its railway infrastructure, which meets the highest modern standards. Today, the railway system of Turkmenistan covers more than 2,000 kilometres. In recent years two new railways were constructed and a third is under way, which has increased the size of the system by nearly 500 kilometres.

The country has become a vital part of the common international transport system. The Trans-Asiatic Railway has created a steel variant of the ancient Silk Road, and this connects Turkmenistan with the countries of Europe and the Asian continent and promotes social and economic development.

Turkmenistan attaches great importance to social protection. Ensuring dignified living standards, security, rights and freedoms of citizens and strengthening the legal basis of society is our internal policy. During the entire transition period, the President and Government worked to provide social support to the population. Since 1993 they have given to their citizens gas, electricity, water, salt, health services and education free of charge.

There is a large-scale housing construction programme. Citizens are guaranteed ownership of comfortable well-designed homes on financially attractive terms, with loans extending over a 15-year period and the future homeowner's employer paying 50 per cent of the costs. Thanks to free education and good access, the country has a high level of education and literacy. Turkmenistan has achieved success in other areas, in particular the protection of the rights of children and the defence of their interests. This is a clear confirmation of our tireless fulfilment of our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Working with the United Nations Children's Fund, in 2000 we successfully implemented a programme for the protection of mothers and children, the comprehensive development of children and the promotion and well-being of the youth.

The country has achieved wide immunization coverage, which has led to a significant reduction in infectious diseases among children. A lot of work is being carried out in the areas of maternal and child health, education and social protection. In Turkmenistan, we are the fourth country in the world to be recognized by the United Nations as a State that has introduced universal iodization of salt in accordance with accepted international standards. In this connection it has been noted that our country consistently carries out its obligations, not only with regard to iodine deficiency but also with regard to the micronutrients that are needed for the development of a growing child's body.

For many centuries, our country has been a crossroads of routes between East and West and South and North and has been a key link in the Great Silk Road, which served as a road of peace and dialogue for cultures for almost one and a half thousand years. This led to the creation of a special spiritual atmosphere in our Turkmen land, and it is not accidental therefore that the national mentality of the Turkmens was generated in its essence as internationally oriented, seeing the individual as the supreme value, and rooted in openness, tolerance, respect for the culture of other peoples and natural peacefulness.

The political system of the State recognizes the important role played by civil society. Public associations and professional and artistic unions play an active role in determining the economic, social and cultural policies of the State.

Turkmenistan has historically respected religious freedom for its citizens and strictly respects generally recognized international norms and principles in the area of freedom of worship. As a result, more than 100 religious organizations are registered in Turkmenistan. The State guarantees the freedom of religion and belief, the equality of faiths before the law and the right of everyone independently to determine his or her relationship to religion.

Turkmenistan recognizes the primacy of universally recognized norms of international law and has joined or ratified the fundamental international instruments in the area of human rights. An important

measure in this area has been Turkmenistan's declaration of its status of a permanently neutral State, and this has been approved by the General Assembly. Turkmenistan has assumed its international obligations in that connection and has fulfilled them over the past 10 years. These obligations are incorporated in the constitutional laws on the neutrality of Turkmenistan and on its international obligations in the field of human rights.

In 1999 we abolished the death penalty. Turkmenistan has adopted specific political, economic and social measures for the protection of the rights of refugees, who arrived in our country between 1991 and 1997. During this period, about 20,000 refugees from Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Armenia and other countries arrived to Turkmenistan. Under the decree of the President of Turkmenistan, more than 16,000 of them received citizenship or residence permits.

We welcome efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, aimed at strengthening the United Nations. We are grateful to the United Nations, its Secretariat, its specialized agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and others, who have coordinated and provided invaluable assistance to the development of our State.

Turkmenistan along with many other States has high hopes in the United Nations and calls for its strengthening and the broadening of its role in the world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ismael Gaspar Martins, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): It is with great honour that I take this floor before this Assembly. At the outset, I should like to congratulate the President, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola, for his election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly of our Organization.

I also wish to express my appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, for his commitment and for the transparent and efficient manner in which he presided over the fifty-ninth session of General Assembly.

Today, 60 years after the foundation of the United Nations, humanity continues to face new and complex challenges. The continuation of armed conflicts, hunger, poverty, massive human rights violations, the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, the scar of terrorism and the risk that non-State actors can acquire, develop and use weapons of mass destruction indeed constitute a threat to international peace and security. Therefore, the international community has every reason to act collectively to reform and strengthen the United Nations in order to render it better prepared to address the many and complex challenges we are facing.

The Republic of Angola follows with great concern the developments in several areas of the world, particularly on the African continent. In spite of a relatively positive tendency characterized by a decrease in areas of tension in the world today, it is necessary to continue to pay special attention to the peace processes in various parts of the world, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan and Guinea-Bissau, to mention only a few.

Regarding Guinea-Bissau, my delegation is satisfied with the results achieved, and we commend the political maturity shown by the people of Guinea-Bissau during the transition period, particularly the civic responsibility demonstrated during the period of presidential elections.

In this context, we believe that respect for the constitutionally established institutions of sovereignty is an indispensable condition for political stability. Only this will create a propitious environment for the accomplishment of tasks that guarantee the maintenance of peace and economic reconstruction. Such is the expectation of the Guinean people, who went to voting stations in such significant numbers. That is a vote for democracy.

In that connection, we welcome the round table on Guinea-Bissau, scheduled for the month of November, and we urge donors to respond positively since the international community's assistance remains a fundamental condition for the process under way.

Regarding the process of consolidation of peace currently in progress in the Great Lakes region, Angola, in its capacity as a core country, is pleased with what has been achieved so far. We thank the Group of Friends, and particularly the Government of

Canada, for the support they have been providing, and especially for the second Great Lakes Conference, due to be held next November in Nairobi.

Although we understand that the primary responsibility to prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa falls upon African States themselves, we share the notion that the international community should, in partnership with regional and subregional organizations, play a more significant role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts on the continent.

Based on our own experience, we believe that in order for strategies for the prevention and resolution of conflicts to be successful, they should be based on an approach that is as inclusive as possible. In this connection, the cooperation of the key organs of the United Nations — the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — is absolutely essential. The pertinent involvement of the international financial institutions, as well as the private and business sectors, has proven to be equally fundamental.

For this reason, we support and welcome the decision of the High-level Meeting to create the Peacebuilding Commission. We are ready to work with partners towards rendering this organ operational as soon as possible.

Angola supports the creation of the permanent fund for the consolidation of peace. We are also of the view that activities related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should be financed from the regular budget and attributed to peacekeeping operations.

While the illicit exploitation of natural resources was not mentioned in the outcome document of the summit, we hope that during the current session of the General Assembly this issue will be given due consideration since it constitutes a fundamental element for the strategy of prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Terrorism undoubtedly constitutes a permanent threat to the world that no country can face alone. Therefore, it calls for cooperation among all countries, with the United Nations playing the central role in the fight against it. In this connection, we join the Secretary-General's plea for the conclusion, as urgently as possible, of the comprehensive convention against international terrorism, which would contain a universally accepted definition of the concept of terrorism.

Five years since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the social and economic situation in several parts of the globe continues to be characterized by extreme poverty.

As well-articulated mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report, "In larger freedom" (*A/59/2005*), poverty is not only about development; it is also a matter of security and respect for human rights, which are fundamental to the Millennium Development Goals. For this reason, I agree with several previous speakers that this issue in the outcome document ought to be dealt with in greater detail. Thus, we look forward to continuing our work in the relevant forums, in particular in a strengthened Economic and Social Council.

The fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other illnesses constitutes an indispensable condition for peace, stability and international collective security. For this reason, we urge the international community to redouble its efforts in mobilizing the required resources for the prevention and treatment of these illnesses.

Let me take this opportunity to express my Government's appreciation to the United States for funding and initiating a programme to fight malaria in Angola, as well as in Tanzania and Uganda.

In my delegation's opinion, in order to meet the challenges facing the world, it is imperative that we proceed to the reform of the main organs of the United Nations, with a view to adapting them to the current reality. We will remain active in the process of reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the other primary bodies of our Organization.

We share the opinion that the composition of the Security Council should properly reflect the present day political reality. Enlarging the Security Council would render it more transparent and more representative, with greater credibility and, in particular, greater authority in its decisions.

Nevertheless, we would like to underline that the enlargement of the Council is just one aspect of the reform that needs to be completed. We should not underestimate other elements of Council reform that we consider no less important, such as the need to

improve and render more transparent its working methods.

I am convinced that the results reached at the High-level Plenary Meeting during this session of the General Assembly will stimulate the continuation of the debate on the process of the reform itself. This will create a platform that will reinforce the Organization's common vision and objectives: strengthening cooperation and providing greater assurances that international peace and stability can only be found in a reinforced multilateralism.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Tiina Intelmann, chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Estonia.

Mrs. Intelmann (Estonia): Allow me to begin by congratulating Mr. Jan Eliasson, upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. We have full confidence in him and in his team. I would also like to commend Mr. Jean Ping for the pivotal role that he played during the fifty-ninth session.

The leaders of the world gathered in this very Hall last week at the largest summit meeting in history. The outcome document adopted by the heads of State or Government has given us very concrete tasks for the future. The reform continues; we will have to maintain focus and take important decisions during the sixtieth session.

My remarks today will be confined to a few main topics, with a specific emphasis on Estonia's contribution to our common goals.

Development, security and human rights are interconnected issues. It is inconceivable that global progress in those areas can be made without an effective multilateral system, fully in line with the principles of the United Nations Charter. As we pointed out a week ago in the outcome document, no country can tackle today's intricate challenges alone. Estonia is fully committed to strengthening the United Nations.

We live in a global and interdependent world and we thus need to combine our efforts. There has to be cooperation among different organizations that have the capacity for conflict prevention and peacekeeping operations, as well as for providing for such requirements as logistical support and training.

The United Nations cannot hope to find a United Nations solution for all problems. Estonia is pleased to see that the United Nations is actively forging a deeper partnership with various organizations. Estonia is actively participating in the common efforts of both the European Union and NATO. We feel that the United Nations, the European Union and NATO should all continue working towards mutually fruitful cooperation and towards greater predictability in terms of the allocation of resources. The more we coordinate our activities, the better will be the results we can achieve in dealing with conflict, poverty and human suffering. The European Union has made great headway in developing battle groups, thus increasing our ability to react swiftly in crisis situations.

Estonia will continue to contribute through various organizations to the stability of Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Kosovo and the Middle East. Our long-term contribution to United Nations monitoring on the Israeli-Lebanese border, our explosives-detecting teams in Afghanistan, our substantive presence — considering the size of Estonia — in Kosovo, our assistance in training the new Iraqi police force and our participation in stabilizing Iraq are just a few examples of my country's contribution to common efforts.

Estonia also acknowledges the need to develop African peacekeeping and to provide better training for United Nations peacekeepers. We hosted a United Nations peacekeeping "train the trainers" course in Estonia just a few months ago, attended by peacekeepers from some 30 countries.

Over the years, we have shown our continued commitment to United Nations activities, including peacekeeping, in a very simple and unequivocal way — by paying regularly and on time the full amount of our assessed contributions.

The role of the international community does not end at the point where we manage to stop an ongoing conflict. As we all know, without adequate State structures, a country faces the risk of relapsing into conflict. Therefore, Estonia welcomes the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, and we hope to see the first results of its work fairly soon.

The next issue I would like to address is terrorism. Here, our position is unequivocal: terrorism is unacceptable in all circumstances, and we should be united against it. We regret that the summit document

does not condemn the deliberate killing of civilians and non-combatants.

Estonia believes that the anti-terrorism strategy put forward by Secretary-General Kofi Annan should be adopted and implemented. We consider the conclusion of the comprehensive convention against international terrorism an utmost priority during the current session of the General Assembly. Estonia fully implements all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and supports the initiatives of the United Nations and other international organizations in preventing and combating terrorism. A few days ago, Estonia signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is another pressing security concern. We regret that no agreement was reached on non-proliferation and disarmament during the summit.

There is a serious concern over slow progress in the sphere of poverty eradication and the realization of other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Estonia, together with other European Union member States, is increasing resources devoted to development cooperation. Despite our status as a new donor, Estonia's official development assistance in 2004 was already 0.08 per cent of gross national income. We are steadily increasing our input, and this will also raise our voluntary contribution to United Nations development-related activities.

No State will be able to achieve the MDGs as long as it does not respect fundamental human rights. The second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People coincides with the targeted time frame for the accomplishment of the MDGs — 2015. If we truly want to achieve the MDGs, we must focus on the issues that matter most to people, including indigenous peoples. The implementation of the MDGs in connection with the indigenous peoples has to be viewed within the broader context of the Millennium Declaration, which brings together the three basic aims of the United Nations Charter — peace and security, economic and social development, and human rights.

One cannot, of course, fail to mention the matter of climate change, the relevance of which has become especially clear after recent natural disasters. Indeed, we have to step up global long-term cooperation so that we can produce real change.

I would like to stress the significance of the Human Rights Council. We see the Council as a standing Charter body, well-connected with other United Nations structures, including the Security Council. Human rights violators should not have a seat at the Council.

Estonia is committed to promoting human rights as universal values that should be guaranteed for all. We are pleased that the summit agreed to double the regular budget for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights within the next five years.

I would like to stress Estonia's firm belief in the extraordinary importance of democracy, good governance and the rule of law. Estonia supports the creation of the Democracy Fund, to which we will make a financial contribution.

Estonia applauds the agreement that we reached on the responsibility to protect. We should all fulfil commitments nationally, but we should also be prepared to deal with cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and all other crimes against humanity urgently requiring outside intervention, even if it has not been requested. In such cases, the international community has to take action.

As a founding member of the International Criminal Court, we are disappointed not to see any reference to this Court in the outcome document. We deem the Court, as well as other instruments of international justice, vital to counter impunity for international crimes.

Sixty years ago, world leaders made a promise to prevent war, to defend human rights and to help the peoples of the world to achieve safety, prosperity and freedom. Let us be bold and try harder than ever to achieve these goals.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

Two delegations have requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ozawa (Japan): Our right of reply is related to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this morning.

First, we firmly believe that the qualifications of a country for permanent membership in the Security Council should be judged by that country's real contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Secondly, regarding the issues of the past, Prime Minister Koizumi elaborated again the Government of Japan's thinking on this matter on 15 August of this year. My delegation would like to remind the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that in the joint statement of the six-party talks, issued a few days ago on 19 September in Beijing, both Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea committed themselves to "take steps to normalize their relations in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, on the basis of the settlement of the unfortunate past and the outstanding issues of concern".

Prior to the announcement of the joint statement of the six-party talks, the representatives of Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held a number of bilateral dialogues to reach this common understanding.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): I am taking the floor to respond to some of the unfounded accusations and misrepresentations that appeared in the statement of the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister in the general debate on 18 September 2005.

First, regarding his reference to the territory surrounding Nagorny Karabakh, those territories have come under the control of the Nagorny Karabakh Armenians as a result of Azerbaijan's refusal to address their peaceful call for self-determination. It is appalling to hear self-victimizing references about aggression from an Azerbaijani representative when it was the Azerbaijani Government that had resorted to full-scale military aggression to suppress the civilian population of Nagorny Karabakh.

Secondly, there are Security Council resolutions that the Azerbaijani side time and again has attempted to misrepresent in order to prove its allegations. The four Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993 clearly counter such false accusations. The language of the resolutions refers to the combatants as local Armenian forces. Further, the resolutions call on the Republic of Armenia to use its good offices with the Nagorny Karabakh authorities to address those matters. This clearly demonstrates that Armenia has no involvement whatsoever in the military process and the resultant outcome.

The third issue that I would like to address is the Minister's characterization of the "dangerous practice carried out by Armenia", referring to the situation in the territories around Nagorny Karabakh. As the report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation fact-finding mission concluded, which was circulated to the General Assembly under the symbol A/59/742, Armenia has no involvement or presence there. The conclusions of the mission are clear. There is neither deliberate policy of settlement nor substantial settlement in the territories around Nagorny Karabakh. The resettlers in Nagorny Karabakh proper are those who were forced as a result of the ethnic cleansing by the Azerbaijani Government to leave their homes in Baku and other Azerbaijani cities, as well as Shaumyan, northern Mardakert and eastern Martuni regions of Nagorny Karabakh currently under Azerbaijani control.

Fourthly, the parallels that the Minister attempts to draw between Nakhchivan and Nagorny Karabakh are baseless and irrelevant. Nagorny Karabakh's need for a permanent land link is an entirely different matter. The two issues are unrelated and dissimilar, both politically and geographically. Once the conflict is resolved and Azerbaijan's blockade against Armenia is lifted, its territory will be available to Azerbaijan for communication with Nakhchivan. Thus, creating formal access to Nakhchivan has never been part of the negotiations. The circumstances are not at all comparable nor should we pretend that they are.

Finally, we share the Minister's cautious optimism and do hope indeed that this opportunity will be seized by all sides. Misrepresenting realities on the ground does not help the peace process, and it was in that spirit that we wished to make our corrections.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.